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**BANTU AND NILOTIC CHILDREN'S SINGING GAMES:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THEIR VALUE COMMUNICATION**

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Doctor of Philosophy  
in the School of Languages and Literatures**

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN  
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## **DECLARATION**

This Thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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This Thesis has been submitted with my approval as University Supervisor.

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**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

This Thesis is dedicated to my beloved daughters, Fatma Tatyana Akinyi (Titi) and Daniela Benta Atieno (Dani) and all children of the world.

University of Cape Town

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study is based on the premise that Luo and Luhya children's singing games are creative works that subtly reflect the aesthetics of the two communities. The aim is to critically examine how the performance of the singing games and their texts reflect the aspirations, norms and values of the macro cultures of the two Nilotic and Bantu communities respectively.

The sampled singing games include those done in the traditional setting, sung in vernacular and those that are taken from the urban or cosmopolitan settings. Our findings reveal that Luo and Luhya children's singing games are a significant resource in communicating the values of the two communities.

Luo and Luhya children imitate their physical and social environments and dramatize about the aesthetics of the communities. This dramatization reflects both traditional values and the new emerging values that have been necessitated by the introduction of western values, formal education, Christianity and others.

In these singing games Luo and Luhya children are able to socialize, learn and also uphold the values of unity and respect for one another. The singing games are significant in the learning process and character development of the children involved in the performance.

Luo and Luhya children's singing games play a significant role in socializing the children in their different societies. The socialization makes the child to be rooted in the aesthetics and aspirations of his/her society.

Urban children's singing games that are sung by Luhya and Luo children reflect the child's creativity, improvisation and the ability to borrow from various sources. The singing games utilize various sources, including the electronic media, print media and also rhymes from other cultures.

Children's singing games are repertoires of a people's aesthetics. Apart from directly teaching the participants cultural issues and requirements, the singing games are crucial to the participants' social and moral development.

Luo and Luhya children's singing games reflect the macro culture of the Luo and Luhya communities respectively and to a great extent the changing values in the Kenyan society.

The study also gives some insights arising from the findings that can be of benefit to future researchers. There is need for researchers to focus on children's singing games as creative works and discover their role in the social and moral development of the child and also find out how these creative works can be used in an educational set up.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 The Luo and Luhya of Kenya

The Luo people of Kenya are called *Joluo* and the language they speak is *Dholuo*. The Luo of Kenya are Nilotes because they are speakers of the Nilo-Saharan group of languages. They belong to a family of ethnolinguistically affiliated groups; a branch of the Nilo-Saharan language family. They are sometimes referred to as River-Lake Nilotes or Western Nilotes.

According to Roscoe and Ogutu (1974:10) “Luo” is related to the word “*luwo*” (to follow). Historically the Luo are said to have followed the River Nile in search of pasture and eventually settled in the areas they currently occupy.

The Luo of Kenya settled in the western part of Kenya in the present Migori, Homabay, Kisumu, Bondo, Rachuonyo, Nyando and Siaya Districts. The Luo of Kenya are a Nilotic group related to the Acholi and Jo-Padhola of Uganda and also the Shilluk, Aruak and Dinka of Sudan (Miruka, 2001:1).

Ogot (1974) reports that the first group of Luo speakers to arrive in Kenya were *Joka-jok*, “the people of god” who migrated from the Tekidi settlement because of a major conflict. They headed south across Uganda towards Mt. Elgon. The history of the *Joka-jok* presents not only the initial migration of the Luo into Kenya but their spread into other areas of the Nyanza province of Kenya.

During the migration, the Luo people came into contact with Bantu speakers, trading and intermarrying with them. This intermarriage of the Luo and the Bantus had great influence; it produced the multi-ethnic and multilingual societies in Yimbo, part of Siaya district.

Other Luo speaking groups, the *Joka-Owiny* and *Joka-Omollo* later arrived, most of them settling in the present day Homa Bay, Suba and Migori Districts.

In contemporary Kenya the Luo are the third largest ethnic group after the Kikuyu and the Luhya. The Luo of Kenya not only occupy areas bordering Lake Victoria but they have also sought settlements in other areas of Kenya as a result of formal employment. Some of them have permanently settled in other places of the country including at the Coast, in the Rift Valley, and Western province among others. The Luo of Kenya are fishermen as well as agriculturalists.

Ocholla-Ayayo (1970:13) calls them “pastoro-agrico-fishing” society which involves herding, farming and fishing. Their association with the lake is evidenced in their commonly used words such as “nyarnam” (daughter of the Lake) or “Janam” (man of the lake).

The Luo children were socialized by use of various genres of oral literature. Today many of them reveal their creativity in various games which include dramatic play and singing

games that are done in characteristic formations. These singing games are not supervised by adults but are a spontaneously dramatized form of children's poetry.

The Luhya (also referred to as Abaluhya) are the second largest ethnic group in Kenya. Luhya refers both to the people and the Luhya languages, a group of closely related languages spoken by Luhya sub-groups. The Luhyas are Bantu speakers and the community is made up of about sixteen (16) sub-ethnic groups in Kenya, the most dominant groups being the: Bukusu, Maragoli, Wanga, Banyore, Marama, Idakho, Isukha, Kisa, Tsotso, Tiriki, Kabras, Banyala, Tachoni, Bakhayo, Marachi and Samia .

Luhya oral literature suggests that the Luhyas migrated into the present day locations, mainly the western province of Kenya, from the north of Africa. Indeed all the sub-ethnic groups of the Luhya claim to have migrated first south from *Misri* (Egypt).

According to Were (1967:96) the Kenyan Luhyas traveled south along the Nile river, as they fled Egypt, before settling in the area of what is now the western province of Kenya. Several reasons have been posited as to why they fled Ancient Egypt: famine, droughts, repeated attacks from foreign invaders among others.

Other sources report that the Luhya and some ethnic groups of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa were all natives of *Misri* (Egypt) before migrating southwards into the interior of Africa over the course of several hundreds or even thousands of years.

Many anthropologists believe that the progenitors of the Luhya were part of the great Bantu migration out of East-central Africa around 1000 B.C. However there are some who suggest that the Bantu speakers were part of a larger migration from Egypt, commonly known as *Misri* in Africa, that approximately occurred between 500 B.C and 1000 AD.

In contemporary Kenya the Luhya mainly occupy the administrative western province of Kenya but others have migrated into other parts of the country due to scarcity of land and formal employment among other reasons.

The Luyhas are mainly agriculturalists but many of the Sub-ethnic communities also keep cattle. Luhya oral literature is fertile with creative imaginative genres that range from the gnomic forms to the long forms.

Luhya children are involved in various socialization activities right from a tender age. Singing and dancing shape their lives in different games and even celebrations. Children's singing games are just part of the Luhya children's creative output that subtly communicate the aesthetic values of the Luhya people.

## **1.2 Background to the Study**

Literature as work of imagination generally focuses on man in society. Because of this focus, literature has been referred to as a “mirror” of society. P’Bitek (1983) defines literature simply as creative works of man, whether spoken or written down. These works exhibit certain characteristics that express a people’s values and aesthetics.

This definition gives recognition to African oral literature as part of the mainstream literature. Indeed, African oral literature, like written literature is a product of man’s imagination. It is also a result of man’s keen observation of the environment. Through vivid imagination, Africans observed the environment and through use of language expressed in artistic ways various values pertaining to their societies.

Mbiti (1969) argues that Africans are notoriously religious. This religiosity cannot be separated from African oracy and artistic communication. Indeed African oral literature pervade the whole spectrum of African traditional life.

Every rite of passage within African communities was celebrated by song and dance. Song plays a significant role in the life of Africans. Nandwa and Bukenya (1983:85) observe that “in most societies, there are songs for every stage and occasion of a person’s life from cradle to the grave”.



Alembi (2002:1) concludes that Africans are not only notoriously religious but also deeply musical and poetic. Africans embellish the wheel of life from birth to death with singing and dancing.

This song and dance is not only confined to adults but children have their own songs that are enacted in various ways. Thus in African communities, there are various categories of songs, ranging from cradle songs to dirges. In between the rites of passage there are often songs like work songs, war songs, love songs and quite significantly children's songs.

Children's songs are those songs that are sung by children in their own games. These songs are performed rather than sung in a static position, hence the term children's singing games. In these songs children dramatize various aspects of their cultural life from an imaginative level. The songs communicate various aspects of the child's community.

Finnegan (1970:304) observes that in most African societies children do to some extent separate themselves from adults in at least some play activities and have some rhymes and songs of their own. According to Finnegan, this is encouraged by the fact that many of these children live in large family groupings, with more time spent outside their own homes in the open air rather than in small, enclosed family circles. This separation from adults is crucial for it gives children an opportunity to be "free" and creative in their own ways.

Children are often separated from adults in the kind of work they are expected to do. In their different activities, children have their songs associated with different tasks. There are many songs that are sung as children dance and play. All these are children's singing games. They are part of the child's creative output.

Finnegan (1970:305) decries the "little systematic interest" that has been taken in children's singing games in Africa. She observes that though isolated instances have been recorded, this has been done without any consideration of context or social significance. These isolated incidents reveal that children are creative, critical and part of the societal imagination and aesthetics.

According to Alembi (2000:44) African Children's oral poetry falls into two categories: lullabies which are mainly sung by babysitters or older sisters when soothing babies to sleep, and children's play songs.

He identifies the second category as singing games which are structured with characteristic formations and performances including a focus on aesthetic features. Alembi (2000) argues that these singing games serve a variety of cognitive purposes, including the development of positive values, reinforcement of a sense of identity and presentation of a people's aesthetics.

It is important to systematically study children's singing games in order to discover their value communication. This is because children are part and parcel of our wider societies and their literature cannot be divorced from the values of our societies.

As Dzansi (2002:1) puts it "it is evident that the playgrounds and homes are fertile grounds for tapping and honing children's artistic potentials" to enhance the understanding of our culture. Indeed children are the preservers and transmitters of culture on the playground. Their singing games form part of a society's value communication.

In Kenya, children from different communities are involved in children's singing games in their games both at home and at school. These singing games have subtle messages that they communicate about the societies of origin.

A deep understanding of these singing games will not only enhance our understanding of our own communities but also shed some light on how other communities in Kenya view their world. This world view has to do with their very struggle in their given environments. From an imaginative level, children's creative output dramatizes how their societies live as well as their aspirations and struggle with the environment.

This study examines Bantu and Nilotic children's singing games in Kenya. The focus is on the values communicated by children's singing games from the two broad linguistic

groups – the Luhya and the Luo. We systematically focus on the singing games' aesthetic value in terms of artistic communication.

### 1.3 Definition of Key Terms

- ***Aesthetic Value:*** The term aesthetic value generally refers to what is appealing literary. The study uses this term to refer to the appeal in children's singing games in terms of artistic communication.
- ***Children's Singing Games:*** This term refers to children's singing rhymes that are part of their play games. These singing games are normally dramatized and are part of children's dramatic play. The study uses the term to strictly refer to the children's dramatized poetry that is part of their games.
- ***Dramatic Play:*** Dramatic play is one of the activities that children engage in. According to Slade (1973:16) it is a play by children between the age of 2½ to 12 years. It is a natural role-play in which children play out a make-believe world. Slade (1973) observes that this role play is based on identification and imitation of life. It is significant to note that children's singing games are part and parcel of children's dramatic play for in them children dramatise various roles as they sing and play.
- ***Children:*** The study uses the word children to refer to human beings between school going age and puberty. Specifically the study uses the term to refer to human beings between school going age and the age of 12. This age category is to be found in primary school (in the Kenyan 8-4-4 system).
- ***Children's literature:*** The term children's literature refers to everything read by the child. This includes written texts, oral tales among others. This term also includes

literature produced by the children themselves. This literature can either be written or oral. The study uses the term children's literature to refer to children's creative output in the form of the games called children's singing games.

- ***Children's Theatre:*** According to Jackson (1982:90) children's theatre is taken to mean performance of plays for a young audience. Jackson's definition focuses on plays that are done for children. This study uses the term children's theatre to refer to the games that children do as they play. This is a theatre created by the children themselves. It is spontaneous and natural. It has no script and does not rely on rehearsal.
- ***Child's Point of View:*** This term refers to the child's world view, perspective of the world and also the child-like vision. The child's point of view includes the child's innocence, the child's sense of justice, where good must triumph while evil must be punished and also the child's moral view of the world, the view that the world is coherent and harmonious and that everything falls in place according to sound moral law. This moral view of life also encompasses the child's view that everything follow one another in a clear and systematic manner.

#### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

Literature reflects the values of a people, their world view, beliefs and daily struggle with nature. Through literature, we learn how various societies organize their lives and how they interpret their surroundings. The reflection of society's values and aesthetics is communicated in both written and oral literature. Indeed the two literatures are part of man's creative endeavours.

Oral literature plays an important role in any society because it is a valuable educational experience that contributes to the total development and self fulfillment of the child exposed to it. Oral literature imparts to the growing persons useful cognitive, performance and effective skills which enable the child to live a rewarding life and to be a useful member of society. This is because the image people have of themselves and of their relationship to the universe is conceived during their formative years.

Children's singing games provide a good example of the way in which what might be expected to be a simple, natural and spontaneous expression of feelings can communicate subtle messages about society and culture. This is because children are part of the larger macro community as far in as beliefs, values, identity, and meaning are concerned.

Apart from the nonsense words or meaningless children's songs, the texts and performance of many children's singing games are based on everyday living and experiences. This recognition calls for a systematic study of children's singing games to uncover the deeper meaning of the singing games in terms of communication of values. The study aims at comparatively analyzing selected Bantu and Nilotic children's singing games from Kenya. The study basically aims to uncover the aesthetic communication of the selected singing games in relationship to the societies of origin.

The comparison is aimed at giving a wider understanding of children's singing games in Kenya; significantly their value communication.

### **1.5 Justification of the Study**

This study is significant in its recognition of children's singing games as an important genre that sheds much light on societal values and organization. This recognition puts children's creative outputs at par with the adult's creativity. Children's singing games cannot be divorced from societal values since children are products of these values, aspirations and norms.

A study of children's singing games contributes greatly to the understanding of children's creative output and how their artistic works are part and parcel of the societies in which children live.

It is also true that little scholarly interest has been taken in the genre of African children's singing games. Indeed many scholars have tended to view this genre just as children's poetry without trying to understand its performance and significance (Akivaga and Odaga 1976, Kipury 1983).

The study therefore becomes invaluable in the area of children's literature and particularly its criticism. It treats children as artistic beings whose creative works have an aesthetic value that cannot be divorced from the aesthetics of the macro society from which the child comes.

By focusing on two communities in Kenya, the study serves as representative of the wider Kenyan children's singing games. By systematically examining the aesthetic value of children's singing games from these communities we are able to understand the culture of the communities and also what brings us together as Kenyans.

Though what unites us as Kenyans in terms of aesthetic values is significant, there is also a need to investigate from an artistic perspective the differences that we have in terms of cultural norms, beliefs and world view. By understanding children's artistic communication, it is possible for us to reconcile these differences in order to build a united nation based on what we have in common as Kenyans.

A comparative study of this nature has not been done before hence the prime significance of the study. Most scholars have only concentrated on studying the oral literature of single communities (Ogutu and Roscoe 1974, Nandwa 1976, Makila 1982, Alembi 2000, Alembi 2002).

Though there is no problem with studying individual communities, a comparative study becomes handy for it gives a wider picture of artistic expressions from different communities.

Even scholars and researchers who have studied children's literary output seem to focus more on single communities (Okhoba 1995, Alembi 2000). This focus, though quite informative is limited to the specific communities.



This study breaks this precedent by examining children's singing games from two (2) Kenyan communities. This should act as an inspiration for scholars to move more into comparative studies so as to give a wider picture of our communities and the bonds that make us Africans and particularly Kenyans.

Given the innocence of children, their artistic works may be more valuable than adult literature which is characterized by overt prejudice and stereotyping.

By studying children's artistic works we are able to appreciate children's literary genres that sometimes just go as "Children's games". The study further gives insight into Children's literary output and their position in the wider culture.

### **1.6 Objectives of the Study**

The study is based on the following objectives:

- (i) To systematically analyse Luhya and Luo children's singing games in Kenya in order to discover their aesthetic value.
- (ii) To compare and contrast the singing games in terms of aesthetic value.
- (iii) To examine the performance of the singing games and its significance to the communities of origin.
- (iv) To examine the changing trends in the performance of the singing games.

### **1.7 Assumptions of the Study**

The study is based on the following assumptions:

- (i) That Kenyan Luhya and Luo children's singing games have much aesthetic value in relation to the communities of origin.
- (ii) That Kenyan Luhya and Luo children's singing games have many similarities and differences in terms of aesthetic value.
- (iii) Kenyan Luhya and Luo children's singing games have specific structures and characteristic formations which communicate deeper meaning in relationship to the communities of origin.
- (iv) That Luhya and Luo children's singing games have been affected by the changing trends in the Kenyan society.

### **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts the theoretical framework of ethnomethodology. Ethnomethodology as a method of social inquiry can be traced back to a breakaway group of sociologists of whom Horold Garfinkel and Harvey Sacks were perhaps the most influential ones. Their dissatisfaction with methods of traditional sociology led to the formation of alternative methods and aims.

Ethnomethodologists question the value of traditional methods of investigation such as use of questionnaires. They believe that such methods draw away the analyst from the

lived beliefs of social reality. They therefore propose closer scrutiny of the methods used by social actors themselves in managing their affairs.

Ethnomethodology is therefore based on the recognition by social scientists of the fact that human communities are not just communities of naïve actors, they are also communities of analysts, who reflect and pass judgements on their own actions (Okombo in Okombo and Nandwa, 1992:24-25).

The centre of the theoretical approach is the recognition that the work of the individual members of a community is on the whole directed by their own consciousness, values, norms and expectations of their community. Therefore whatever creative output comes out of this community can only be fully understood within the cultural and linguistic context of the community.

Ethnomethodology is therefore part of ethnopoetics which is a theoretical framework that focuses on the aesthetic and poetic structuring of oral art. Attonen (1994:113) observes that the methodology of ethnopoetics lies in pragmatics, phenomenology, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodological conversation analysis and the ethnography of speaking and the performance approach.

Ethnopoetics has various arguments relating to culture and creativity. These arguments have been viewed by some researchers as strands or branches of ethnopoetics. Alembi (2002) for instance, identifies what he calls Dell Hymes' Strand of ethnopoetics and again Dennis Tedlock's approach.

Hymes' (cited in Attonen: 1994:112) view is based on the idea that works of verbal art have subtle organizations of lines and verses. Hymes emphasizes that the "expressions are founded upon a socially constituted poetic structure that is presented in the organization of experience as well as in the organization of reports on that experience (Attonen, 1994:113). Hymes maintains that the lines or verses are not only poetic but also a kind of rhetoric of action in that they carry hidden cultural schemes for the organization of experience (Attonen, 1994: 113).

Attonen (1994:113) observes that Dennis Tedlock's strand of ethnopoetics is based on "the patterning of the texture, which must also be shown in the transcription." This approach stresses on the importance of the aural qualities in performance since they are viewed as being crucial to the meaning of the performance and text.

Both Hymes and Tedlock emphasise the need to place cultural creative works within the culture that has produced them. But the Dell Hymes' School of thought slightly differs with Tedlock's in that they don't lay emphasis on performance as Tedlock's school does.

The study combines both Dell Hymes' and Tedlock's approaches and places children's creative output within the cultural context. Both the texts and the performances are analysed to come up with a clear understanding of meaning.

We therefore adopt Alembi's (2002:22) Conceptual Model which he calls "infracultural" model. Alembi (2002) uses this term to mean interpretation of words and actions within specific cultural contexts. The implication here is that the meanings of the words and actions in the collected children's singing games can only be located within the perceptions of the sampled communities.

The methodological implications of this approach are purely ethnomethodological. Okombo (in Okombo and Nandwa, 1992) outlines the approach's implications in the field. The researcher must be self-observing and be closely involved in the activities of the communities under study. He/she must actually move closer to a participant observation. It is only by so doing that the researcher can uncover the subtle meaning in the oral texts. This requires what Okombo calls "mastering the language of the community under investigation" (in Okombo and Nandwa, 1992:30).

Alembi's (2002) infracultural model agrees with Okombo's view on the ethnomethodological approach. The conceptual framework has the following features identified by Alembi (2002:23-24):

- (i) The need for insider analysis and interpretation of works of art within a given reality of a community. Alembi (2002) uses the word insider in the same manner that Okombo (in Okombo and Nandwa, 1992:50) hints at. Being an insider means living and mastering the communicative means of the community under study. "Insiders" therefore do not necessarily have to be members from the community of study but may include "outsiders" who have genuine interest in studying the

community. Therefore insiders excludes armchair and rumour based scholars (Murunga, 2001).

- (ii) Interpretation of oral texts within their cultural contexts: Our concerned approach recognizes oral texts as deeply rooted in the culture and tradition of the performers. Therefore both the action in performance and the works are contextualised and can only be analysed within their cultural context. Interpreting words and actions outside the context can lead to serious misunderstanding of the message. Bauman (1957:292) has this to say on performance:

Performance represents a transformation of the basic referential uses of language. In other words, in artistic performance of this kind, there is something going on in the communicative interchange which says to the auditor 'interpret what I say in some special sense,' do not take it to mean what the words alone, taken entirely, would convey.

Bauman's observation is quite significant in investigating the underlying meaning in children's singing games that have been viewed by people as just games.

- (iii) Examining narrative patterns beyond mere concern with stylistic features and other formal elements of the surface structure to using these features to elucidate the theme of study (Harvilahti, 1998:194). The implication for our study is to move beyond the mere lines sung by children but focus also on the performance in relation to the culture in context.

- (iv) Deep involvement in dialogue and interaction to understand the structural and underlying issues surrounding a phenomenon and a community (Melhuus, 1995:97, Okombo and Nandwa, 1992:29-30).
- (v) Significance of the performed and given meaning. Oral texts have only meaning, within the culture and tradition that have produced them (Okombo and Nandwa, 1992, Foley, 1995).
- (vi) Co-operative entry into the performance arena by the performer, audience and the researcher to describe the meaning. Co-operative entry into the arena of performance ensures a fully experienced event. It enables the researcher to delve more into the deeper meaning of the phenomenon (Alembi, 2002). In this study the researcher closely interacted with children in the two communities and participated with them in their creative output, children's singing games.

As noted earlier the ethnopoetic approach adopted in this study stresses attention to the artistic merits of the oral material as a way of giving the culture of origin voice and recognition. The collected children's singing games were analysed within the contextualized areas of their production and rendition.

## **1.9 Literature Review**

Studies on children's literature have tended to focus more on the criticism of what has been written for children and particularly children's story books (Butler, 1973, Stephens, 1992, Oberstein-lesnic, 1994, May, 1995, Weche, 2000 among others).

All the studies however, have noted the importance of children's literature to the child and in any society.

Children's literature and children's literature criticism attract people who often have a strong interest in children's books based on a conviction of personal knowledge and experience of children, childhood or reading.

Children's literature might be seen in the modern multi-media world to be a marginal if not positively elitist field. However as Oberstein-lesnik (1994) observes, children's literature places itself at the heart of discussions on vitally sensitive issues. On some level it claims pertinence to emotional life and experience, control of vision, consciousness, ethics and morality.

Children's literature includes what children read, what is performed for them and also what children themselves have produced as their literature. This literature review focuses on available studies on children's creative output and particularly their dramatic plays, play games and poetry that is dramatised.



Indeed children's creative outputs are reflections of children's imaginative mind and like any other literature children's singing games and dramatic plays are part and parcel of the child's culture.

This is what Stephens (1992:92) emphasizes when he argues that the relationship between children's literature and contemporary cultural discourses, social and linguistic conventions, oral traditions and so on are crucial in understanding the society. There is a complex relationship especially in the extent to which the literature implicitly reflects a culture's dominant ideologies, or is sometimes a vehicle for acculturating its audience.

Since Finnegan (1970:305) decried what she called "little systematic interest in children's verse in Africa", many studies have come up in the area of children's poetry or verse. According to Finnegan (1970) many of the isolated studies that were recorded by 1970 lack any discussion of the context or social significance of the recorded verse.

She observes that lullabies though simple, provide a good example of the way in which what might be expected to be simple and natural or spontaneous expression of feelings can provide subtle information about a people's culture. Lullabies are governed by cultural conventions and their transmission is thus affected by this. Finnegan's observation is significant in any ethnopoetic approach to children's singing games. Her premise is that these games cannot be truly explicated outside the culture and norms that have guided their production.

Finnegan (1970: 305) goes on to add that children have their own singing games and rhymes and that the singing games must be seen as depending partly on the particular ideas of each society about age structure, assignment of tasks, and behaviour expected of the various age groups.

She observes that African children have action songs (singing games) that are more complicated in that they are based on imitation and have definite set dance patterns. She gives the example of the Shona children who have a singing game in which they imitate an eagle catching small chickens. She also cites the Hottentots' action song based on the common principles of a ring or of two rows of performers, facing each other.

Finnegan (1970:310-313) refers to a study carried out by Tucker (1933) from various Southern Sudanese peoples (Nuer, Shilluk, Dinka, Bari and Lokuto).

Tucker's study discovered that children in the communities under study had singing games that were characterized by clear formations. Some of the singing games were done in an arch or line, for instance among the Lokuto.

Tucker (cited in Finnegan, 1970) focuses on games done mostly by boys and his findings are significant in any study of African children's singing games in general. His discovery that most of the games are based on imitation and that the singing games have set dance formations or patterns is significant in the analysis of any children's singing games in Africa. This becomes handy in our analysis of the aesthetic communication of the Bantu

and Nilotic Children's singing games from Kenya, with specific limitation to the Luhya and Luo children's singing games.

Dramatic play as done through children's singing games is an effective learning tool. Slade (1973:2) recognizes the importance of children's singing games in any society. He views the singing games as part of the child's moral and social development activities.

Indigenous forms of children's theatre such as story-telling and children's games communicate knowledge to the children. They teach values such as unity, the proper way to behave amongst elders and in-laws and discourage anti-social behaviour.

Children grow through the acting of singing games. Children's singing games are art in that they draw up on the imaginative and creative potential of the child. According to Victor D'Amilo (cited in Siks, 1958:7) "every child is a potential creator and is endowed with those sensibilities that characterize the artist."

In singing games, children draw from these sensibilities and translate their inner and outer experiences into play as they act out the verses and take different roles.

The creativity in children is further noted by Davies (1983:90) in his argument that every child already possesses, almost from birth, all the necessary requirements for drama. Children singing games are therefore artistic expressions.

In acting out, children are able to understand different characters in different situations. Indeed they also understand how different things work in society. In singing games children dramatise in formations or groups as they re-enact different situations. Jackson (1982:32) stresses the importance of acting out: “The best way to be anybody – to get the feel of him as he is from the inside is to act out his character and functions.”

Roscoe (1977) gives a critical review of African oral literature noting that children’s poetry needs further investigation. Roscoe observes that African children have a huge reservoir of poetry whose content highlights various issues on African culture. Talking about children’s poetry in general, he observes that sometimes African children’s poems are obscure in meaning and hence the need for scholars to attempt a systematic analysis. This observation is quite significant in the study of children’s singing games. Indeed many of the children’s singing games and rhymes are limericks capitalizing on rhyme and sound. There is need to discover the significance of the repetition in the context of the culture that has produced the songs.

Though focusing on African children’s poetry in general without specifically dealing with children’s singing games, many studies on the genre of children’s verse are significant to any study of African children’s literature. These studies include P’Bitek, 1974, Nandwa, 1976, Odaga, 1985 among others.

P’Bitek (1974) in his study of the oral poetry of the Acoli of northern Uganda examines the social significance of the Acoli’s children’s poetry. He concludes that Acoli’s

children's poetry is an important agent of socialization. It introduces children to the cultural and moral patterns of the Acoli community.

P'Bitek acknowledges the imaginative creativity of the Acoli children who he says, without the aid of adults, are capable of modifying the existing songs to suit their needs. Although he does not use the term singing games, it is rare in the African context to find songs or poems that are sung while standing still. Most songs are normally accompanied by dance and are also dramatized. Children's songs are mainly dramatized as children play, hence the appropriateness of the terms singing games, dramatized verse, or play games.

In her analysis of the oral literature of the Luhya of western Kenya, Nandwa (1976) makes a significant observation. She notes that meaning in children's poetry is contextualised and depends on the circumstances under which the songs are sung or the kind of game in action. This observation is significant to our study which is based on an ethnopoetic approach to children's singing games.

Odaga (1985:3) argues that the literature of any given group of people is necessary and important for its youth. This is because the image people have of themselves and their relationship to the universe is conceived during their formative years. This contention recognizes literature as an important socializing agent and children's literature cannot be divorced from this important task.

Children's singing games are part of a society's oral literature. And as Nandwa and Bukenya (1994) argue, oral literature plays an important role because it is a valuable educational experience contributing to the total growth, development and self fulfillment of the child exposed to it.

Oral literature imparts to the growing child useful cognitive, performance and affective skills which enable the child to live a rewarding life and be a useful member of society. Through acting out their singing games, children become more keen, observant, more sensitive and sensibly responsive towards external stimuli.

Though most studies have generally focused on children's oral poetry without specifically dealing with the singing games as art that has aesthetic functions, there are a few that have specifically dealt with children's singing games or play games as art that has aesthetic communication.

Though not using the term children's singing games, Okhoba (1995) in her study of style and meaning in Abamarachi children's oral poetry, hints at the significance of the "performed" verses. These verses are not just performed through "dry" recitation but are dramatized in set formations and even movements.

Her study reveals that the Abamarachi, who are a sub-community of the wider Luhya community, have children's poems whose meaning is contextualised. She concludes that 'Children's oral poetry is a meaningful and significant aspect of the cultural art of the

people of Abamarachi” (Okhoba, 1995:iv). This study is significant in its recognition of the relationship between children’s literature and the culture that the children come from.

Alembi (1991) and (2000) study the oral poetry of the Abanyole people of western Kenya. In both studies Alembi concludes that the Abanyole children’s poetry falls into two classes. The first group consists of lallubies that are mainly sung by babysitters while the second category consists of what he calls, “Singing games which are structured with characteristic formations on their aesthetic features which include a variety of cognitive features” (Alembi, 2000:44). Alembi’s second class of children’s poetry is significant to this study. According to him the aesthetic features of the singing games depict various issues in society. He observes that the Abanyole of western Kenya, who belong to the wider Luhya community, have a variety of children’s singing games that shed a lot of light on the culture, norms and expectations of the Abanyole people.

Alembi’s (1991) study is quite informative in terms of shedding light on how children’s singing games are performed in terms of style and the general rendition. However this study is general and limited to a few singing games (only 19 games). The study also fails to delve deeper into the aesthetic communication of the songs in the context of the Abanyole culture. The current study aims at a comparative study of Bantu and Nilotic children’s games and delves deeper into the contextual aesthetic communication of the collected songs, with specific focus on the Luhya and Luo children’s singing games.

Other studies that have specifically studied children's singing games include Mombera (2003) and (Nabwire 2004).

In all these studies the researchers examine the significance of the singing games in terms of cultural communication. Though short projects, the studies shed light on the fact that what the children act and sing out in their play games has something to say about the culture in which the children have been born. The performance of children's games is contextualised and, apart from entertaining children, the dramatization of the songs has an educational value that is contextualized in terms of the society's norms and values.

What all these studies reveal is that children's singing games are an art and a keen study of them can reveal subtle information about the children's cultures. Indeed as May (1995:95) has correctly observed "jokes that children invent can be rewarding." A lot of play ground rhymes have a lot to say about a people's culture and way of life.

In his Ph.D defence statement entitled "Singing and Dancing the Rhythm of Life" (2002), Alembe observes that Africans embellish the wheel of life from birth to death with singing and dancing." This is true because children engage in singing games right from a tender age. Their singing games are part and parcel of the total wheel of life of the community in terms of values, norms and expectations.

Dzansi (2002) discusses Ghanaian cultural values and expressions that are embedded in children's playground repertoire. Her study is based on the description and interpretation



of Ghanaian children's singing games collected in the year 2001. The analysis is grounded within the cultural context of the Ghanaian indigenous communities. Dzansi (2002:3) concludes that the children's playground games and songs are fertile grounds for tapping and honing artistic potentials.

In this study Dzansi makes some significant discoveries relating to children's singing games. She identifies various themes embedded in children's singing games. These themes range from cultural ideologies, marriage, naming and its significance, to the importance of some traditional foods.

Dzansi (2002:2) correctly notes that "most importantly, children are part of the macro community in as far as beliefs, values, identity and meaning are concerned". Apart from the nonsense syllables or meaningless words, the texts of the game songs are based on everyday living and experiences (Nketia, 1974; Nzewi, 1999; Okai, 1999).

Echoing the findings of other researchers (Amoaku, 1976; Nketia, 1974) Dzansi (2002:9) concludes that "Children's play songs, especially the texts and the music are typical representations of the Ghanaian indigenous culture." This conclusion helps any researcher interested in understanding children's creative outputs and how they relate to the wider macro community in terms of aesthetics, values, beliefs and even lifestyle.

Children's singing games are part of children's play and games. Though simple and sometimes carrying nonsense words, they are an art that can reveal much about society at

the same time helping children to develop in various ways. The “Association for Children Education International” (ACEI) outlines what it believes is the significance of play to children. ACEI believes that play enhances learning and development of children of all ages, cultures and domains. This development includes physical development, social and emotional development, cognitive development among others. All these are outlined in the Association’s position paper “Play: Essential for all children” (2005).

Though ACEI’s position is on play in general, it is significant to our investigation into the aesthetic communication of children’s singing games. This is because children’s singing games are part of the child’s play. They are done by children right from a tender age and are part of children’s creative output that is contextualised in terms of culture. Our focus is on how singing games communicate aesthetic issues related to the child’s indigenous community.

Mwanzi (in Indangasi et. al., 2006) looks at how children’s rhymes reveal more about the environment. She examines selected children’s singing games and observes that the “songs are a celebration of the people’s reliance on the environment.” In her paper entitled “Conjuring back the ecosystem for posterity,” Mwanzi acknowledges the creativity in children’s singing games and the fact that the singing games communicate crucial knowledge that is part of the children’s culture of origin.

In her inaugural lecture, entitled “The Role and significance of oral literature in social and psychological development of children” Professor Ciarunji Chesaina emphasizes the

significance of children's play to children's development. She notes that children's singing games are enjoyable because of the melody and help children develop memory capability. She writes:

A key landmark in the cognitive and creative development of children is imagination. Imagination helps a child call to mind situations they have experienced as well as those they may not have actually experienced. A child is able to engage in make-believe and visualize being in a place which he/she has never visited, or even to see himself/herself as someone else (2007:5).

Imitation, role play and identification are key characteristics of children's singing games. It is through these characteristics that the aesthetic values of the songs can be discovered. Chesaina refers to Children's Singing games from the Kalenjin people of Kenya and notes that children use the singing games to add rhythm and enjoyment to their games while at the same time socializing with one another. She adds that:

The song also plays a didactic role: it is a most effective way of teaching children about farming... an economic activity. (2007:11).

Chesaina's observations are significant and reveal the significance of children's singing games as creative works that are part of a society's imaginative works that communicate a community's values.

Our literature review reveals that many studies have been done on African oral poetry in general. Most of these studies have looked at children's poetry and recitations without studying the poetry as part of the child's dramatic play. Secondly, most of the studies have focused on single communities and mainly the importance of the poetry to children.

Studies that have focused on children's singing games are isolated and tend to focus on the significance of the songs to children and the community of origin. The researchers have studied singing games from single communities.

Our study gives a comparative analysis of Bantu and Nilotic Children's singing games in Kenya with the view of examining their aesthetic communication as forms of art. The Luhya and Luo communities represent Bantu and Nilotes respectively. The study views Luo and Luhya children as creative beings and as part and parcel of the wider community.

#### **1.10 Scope and Limitations**

This study mainly focuses on the aesthetic value of selected children's singing games from two communities in Kenya: the Luhya and the Luo. The focus is on the aesthetic value of the collected singing games.

We were limited to one hundred and forty-five (145) children's singing games from the two communities. For the sake of balance, the study focuses on about fifty children's singing games from each community. These singing games were selected from a collection of over one hundred and eighty children's singing games from the two communities. The collected singing games included those performed by Luhya and Luo children in their vernacular and a sample of urban or cosmopolitan children's singing games performed by Luo and Luhya children.

A study on children's singing games can delve into many areas of the games in terms of style, performance and the general message communicated. This study is a comparative one based on the aesthetic value of the collected singing games. The sampled singing games were comparatively analysed in order to arrive at their value communication.

In order for us to come up with a clear picture and informative findings, the study examined the aesthetic value of the singing games as communicated through performance and also the texts themselves.

By limiting ourselves to aesthetic value as communicated through the text of the games as revealed in performance, we aimed at giving a wider analysis of the singing games so as to discover their aesthetic merit in terms of communication of values.

Our sampling of the two communities was guided by various factors. Luo and Luhya communities were selected because they represent Nilotes and Bantu respectively.

The selection of the two communities was also influenced by the writer's community of origin, Luo. The two communities border each other and a lot of intermarriage has happened between them. The researcher, coming from the Luo community, has had opportunity to interact extensively with the Luhya community. Again the proximity of the communities made the field research easier.

Sampling of the two communities was also guided by the researcher's envisioned methodology. Having settled on ethnomethodology as a theoretical framework, the choice of Luhya became invaluable. This is because the researcher has lived in both the two communities and is fluent in both Luhya language and Dholuo language. Writing on ethnomethodology as a theoretical framework in the study of oral literature, Okombo (in Okombo and Nandwa eds., 1992:31) says:

No one can do this kind of research satisfactorily without mastering the language of the community under investigation.

The sample gives a wider picture of Bantu and Nilotic children's singing games in Kenya. The number of selected singing games was influenced by the research time, funds and other constraints relating to field work.

The sampled singing games (over 140) were viewed to be more representative and could allow for a thorough investigation into the aesthetic communication as revealed in the children's creative output.

There are Luhya Bantu and Luo Nilotic speaking communities in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and other African countries. This study is limited to the Luhya and Luo of Kenya. Luhyas occupy the administrative province of Western Kenya while the Luos occupy Nyanza Province of Kenya. The study focuses on these two communities from the said provinces.

The Luhya community has many sub-communities that form the wider community of the Abaluhya people. The collected singing games reflect the wider Abaluhya community since they were collected from many of the Luhya sub-communities. Generally most of the sampled children's singing games were collected from Nyanza and Western Provinces of Kenya. This delimitation enabled us to carry out a thorough research and come up with informative findings. The sampled communities are more accessible to the researcher.

The urban or cosmopolitan children's singing games sung by Luo and Luhya children were collected from cosmopolitan settings and urban centres in Nyanza and Western provinces. Others were collected from estates dominated by Luo and Luhya children in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya.

### **1.11 Methodology**

The study proceeds from the premise that any creative work of art whether oral or written has its aesthetic value. To discover the aesthetic value of verbal arts and particularly that of children's singing games, we adopted the following methodology.

The researcher adopted a self-observing approach. This called for close participation in the activities and the games of children from the two different linguistic groups. The researcher closely participated and observed children's games and their singing games in order to come up with a clear picture of the aesthetic value of the singing games.

Participating with the children in their singing games enabled him to analyse the aesthetic value of their singing games within the cultural parameters in which the children have grown. This is because verbal arts will only be dry skeletons if not placed within the cultural context of their production.

The participation was cautiously done so as not to raise alarm or suspicion among the children. For this to be effective the researcher took more time with children in the two communities sampled for research. This is crucial for research among children since there is need to familiarize oneself with the children and their subtle likings and dislikes; in general, their worldview.

The singing games were recorded as performed by children. Later a direct translation from vernacular to English was done.

Both the performance and the translated text were analysed in terms of their aesthetic value within the context of the cultures, norms and values that engendered their production.

Performance was treated as the backbone of children's verbal arts and thus all features of performance were contextually analysed.

The collected data was analysed and categorized in relation to performance, formations or style. Therefore the singing games from the two communities were comparatively



analysed in terms of style and performance and how the two communicate the aesthetic value of the communities.

The methodology required close observation and interaction with the communities under study to understand their children's creative output. The observation was not casual but one of close interest and participation in the children's singing games.

Collection of the data was carried out between June 2006 and December 2007. The researcher visited various schools in Nyanza and Western Provinces of Kenya and interacted with children in various primary schools. In some cases the researcher participated with children in their games and the recording was done spontaneously as children went on with their singing games. To collect urban or cosmopolitan children's singing games, the researcher visited cosmopolitan schools in Nyanza and Western provinces. Various estates in Nairobi were also visited in order to collect urban children's singing games sung by Luo and Luhya children.

Children play in different situations both at home, school and even in church. The researchers took more time with children in their plays. Many of the sampled singing games were collected during school holidays, April, August and December. During school holidays children have more time to gather away from adults and dramatize, role-play and imitate the adult world while discarding adult rules.

During school time children engage in various singing games during break time or in the afternoon when they are free to go for their games. The researcher utilized all these situations thus enabling him to collect many singing games in different situations.

It is also important to note that the researcher, having lived in the two communities had the opportunity to recall the games he played when he was young. This gave him the opportunity of easily identifying with the child performers and being part of them.

From the Luhya community the collection aimed at covering more of the Luhya sub-communities. Thus the researcher collected children's singing games from the Kisa, Maragoli, Bukusu, Banyore, Wanga, Idakho, Isukha among other Luhya sub-communities.

The collected Luo children's singing games were mainly collected from the Luo of South Nyanza in Migori, Homabay and Rachuonyo districts. Other songs were collected from Kisumu, Nyando and Siaya districts.

As noted earlier the methodology adopted was that of keen observation, participation and identification with the children from the two broad linguistic groups. The researcher utilized a self-observing approach which enabled him to intermingle with the children without raising any suspicion.

## **1.12 Organization of the Thesis**

### **Chapter One: Introduction to the Study**

This chapter includes a brief introduction to the two communities under study, the general introduction to the problem, literature review, theoretical framework, objectives, assumptions of the study, justification and significance of the study, methodology and scope and limitation, definition of key terms and organization of the dissertation.

### **Chapter Two: Aesthetic Value Communication in Luhya and Luo Children's Singing Games**

The chapter critically examines, evaluates and analyses children's singing games from the two communities in order to discover their aesthetic value communication.

### **Chapter Three: Style and Aesthetic Communication in Luhya and Luo Children's Singing Games**

This chapter looks into the various performance styles employed in the singing games and how the styles communicate cultural values. The focus is more on the oral rendition of the singing games and the dance/play formations and how the two are contextualized.

### **Chapter Four: Changing Trends in Luhya and Luo Children Singing Games**

This chapter examines the changing trends in the performance of Luo and Luhya children's singing games as revealed in the collected singing games. The chapter also looks at a sample of cosmopolitan children's singing games that Luo and Luhya children participate in. The chapter examines how the changing Kenyan society has influenced the texts and the performance of Luo and Luhya children's singing games.

## **Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

The chapter gives a summary of the findings, specifically on the ethnopoetic analysis of the collected Luo and Luhya children's singing games. It also gives conclusions based on this comparative study. Lastly, the chapter gives recommendations arising out of the insights of the study, particularly for future researchers.

University of Cape Town

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **AESTHETIC VALUE COMMUNICATION IN LUO AND LUHYA CHILDREN'S SINGING GAMES**

#### **2.1 Luhya Children's Singing Games**

Luhya children perform different children's singing games. In their performances they isolate themselves from the adults and creatively participate in different singing games that reveal the aesthetics, norms and cultural patterns of the Luhya people. These singing games are performed in different movements and dance formations that are in line with the Luhya aesthetics and cultural values. The singing games reveal different values concerning the Luhya community. These values are subtly improvised in the texts and the performance styles of Luhya children's singing games.

Though children may sometime not be directly conscious of the deep meaning of their children's singing games, both the performance and the texts of the collected Luhya children's singing games reveal that children imitate their immediate environment, communicate the cultural aesthetics of their communities and are part and parcel of the changing trends in terms of socio-economic values, lifestyles and the wider values resulting from interaction with other communities and also formal education.

##### **2.1.1 Luhya Children's Singing Games and the Environment**

Luhya oral literature has much aesthetic value communication that gives more information on the Luhya people when examined within the cultural context of the

community. As many scholars who have carried out research on this community (notably Alembe, 2000; Nandwa 1976;) have noted, children's singing games sung by the Luhya children are unique in highlighting the intricate relationship between human and the environment.

This is indeed true for the other genres of oral literature among the Luhya. Many of the Luhya animal stories, ogre stories and even the short forms such as puns, riddles, tongue-twisters among others were performed with the view of educating children on the environmental issues with the aim of enhancing respect for the environment and hence preserving it for prosperity. Indeed many of the genres of oral literature of the Luhya people of Kenya have elements of conserving the ecosystem for prosperity. Performance of the Luhya children's singing games reveal a number of singing games that touch on the environment with an aim of protecting and preserving it. These singing games reveal the community's aesthetic values in terms of the relationship they have with their environment. This value communication is in line with their cultural aesthetics and beliefs. The singing game "Mama mbe tsimbindi tsie okhumitsa" (Mother give me cow peas I go and sow) has significant information concerning the Luhya's aesthetic value on the environment.

This singing game is sung across all the Luhya sub-ethnic groups. It is a celebration of the Luhya's reliance on the environment and also reveals their aesthetics on indigenous leafy vegetable foods. The first line is repeated to emphasize the importance of the indigenous seeds – 'tsimbindi' (cow peas) and also the need to "sow", metaphorically

implying preserving them. Cow peas are indigenous to the Luhya of Western Kenya and loved for their green leaves that provide vegetable foods. 'Tsimbindi' comes in various varieties but the one that is most valued among the Luhya is the drought resistant type. This type is a protein legume and also provides vegetable food during the dry season.

In the singing game the children juxtapose this indigenous leafy vegetable food with another one that is highly drought resistant, "eshirietso" (*Erythrococca bongensis*), a green leafy vegetable food.

In the singing game the children take us back to the environment and recall how "eshirietso" saved their community from hunger.

"Eshirietso" is a leafy vegetable food that grows in the form of a bush. It is drought resistant and can survive a long drought. It is a rich source of vitamins. It is significant that children, through their singing games, have stored the knowledge of this vegetable which many young people living in urban areas may not have eaten or even seen.

The singing game emphasizes, "if there had not been 'Eshirietso' hunger would have killed us". This tribute paid to this traditional leafy vegetable food is not just a celebration of the importance of indigenous leafy foods but also a call to preserve the environment. This traditional bush/herb's superiority to cow peas vegetables is highlighted in the performance style of the singing game (see Chapter three) as the performers gesture its sowing act repeatedly followed by the words, "Nzie, Nzie, Nzie" (I

go, go go). Its superiority is also underlined in how it is said to have ‘saved’ the community from hunger. The performers contrast the existence of the indigenous leafy vegetable food with a delicacy such as meat (“khanyama”). Meat is rare and when it comes there is celebration:

And when you see meat  
You grind the grain happily.

The children reveal how meat as a delicacy is rare and when it comes, their mother grinds grain for flour while coquettishly swinging her neck showing her happiness. Mwanzi (in Indangasi et. al, 2006:5) has many significant comments on this Luhya children’s singing game. It is worth quoting her at length:

A further analysis of this song suggests a criticism of the use of non-biodegradable fertilizers. It has been noted that with the increased use of non-degradable farm inputs, indigenous woods and bushes are vanishing and with their disappearance is also the disappearance of the knowledge of such indigenous flora and use to which they have been put over the years. This means that the preservation of the soil structure which has always supported these invaluable indigenous plants is crucial and the reliable reminder of this is our oral literature.

This observation recognizes children’s oral literature and particularly singing games as part of a peoples’ wider creative repertoire that stores their values and passes them out aesthetically for educational purposes.

Respect for the environment is not only reflected in the Luhya children’s singing games that celebrate indigenous leafy vegetable foods but also in other singing games that sing about traditional/indigenous trees that served various purposes in the community before



the introduction of the barbed wire. Traditionally, the Luhya had indigenous trees that were used for fencing. Such trees included “ebikhoni” (*Euphorbia*) “olwabari”, “omusangula” among others.

Luhya children sing about some of these trees and dramatize the importance of the traditional trees in the community. The singing game “olukaka lwatinya” (The fence is strong) focuses on such indigenous tree – “omusangula”. The game goes:

My dear kinsmen x2  
What wood did we use to construct the fence?  
We constructed using ‘omusangula’  
The fence is strong!  
True it’s strong!

Though many people may not notice the subtle aesthetic communication in this children’s singing game, a critical examination reveals that the game extols the value of the indigenous tree “omusangula”. The tree serves as wood and also produces fruits.

In Kenya, there has been wanton destruction of indigenous forests for settlement purposes and it is indeed crucial that children’s literature should call for the preservation of indigenous trees in this singing game. Traditional trees like the “omusangula” and others take us back to our traditional aesthetics of the environment that communicates the community’s relationship with their immediate surrounding.

Luhya children not only sing and dramatize on the nutritional value of the traditional herbs and trees, but their playground songs also reveal the community’s aesthetics of psycho-medicinal trees which are believed to confer health to the sick from a simple

ritual done around the tree. Such a ritual could include a jig or dance around the tree by the sick person affected. Such a children's singing game that touches on the medicinal value of the indigenous trees is the one that sings about "Mumps". The tree in question here is the "omurembe" (a type of desert cactus). This tree grows in western Kenya and has been found among most of the sub-ethnic groups of the Luhya including the Banyore, Kisa, Idakho, Isukha, Wanga, Bukusu among others.

When children were affected by mumps they were asked to carry bundles of firewood and sing and dance around this tree several times before throwing the firewood at the tree and taking off without looking back at the tree. This traditional ritual was/is believed to be able to heal the victims. This ritual attests to the people's belief in the power of the "omurembe" to restore health. Many testify to the healing powers of this tree which they experienced when young. The singing game appears in a short verse:

Mumps x2  
Fly and land  
Mumps x2  
Fly and land on the 'omurembe'.

The singing game appears in the form of a healing ritual mainly performed by children suffering from mumps. In most cases, the children are not accompanied by adults. They get the knowledge of the performance from their older siblings. Outsiders may not understand this ritual; neither can they comprehend the relationship the Luhyas attach to the 'omurembe' tree. However the Luhya attach sacred importance to this tree. The tree is not used for firewood among many of the Luhya sub-ethnic groups – notably Kisa, Idakho, Isukha among others.

The fact that the tree is not supposed to be cut down for use as firewood attests to the community's aim of preserving the indigenous trees. Once the victims throw at it the bundles of firewood, they take off at a high speed without looking back to see the tree. This attests to the medicinal and religious values attached to the tree and also the need to preserve the environment.

The Luhya children as social beings get involved in various singing games that reflect their culture in different ways. The aesthetic values communicated in their children's singing games are part of the wider macro aesthetics of the Luhya people. When they sing about the environment they touch on various issues including the animals in the environment, need to conserve the environment, among others. The images they use in their singing games are taken from their immediate environment and have a cultural message attached to them. Indeed their singing games highlight the Luhya's conscious control of the environment, their need to preserve the environment for self-sustainability and life-support. Luhya oral literature as reflected in Luhya children's singing games reveals clear aims of environmental conservation for sustainable development. This is dramatized by children in their singing games as they touch on the environment and call for its preservation.

### **2.1.2 Luhya Children's Singing Games and the Kinship System**

Kinship system refers to a family organization that is based on a string of relationships of people who are directly or indirectly related through blood relationship or marriage. This basically is a kind of extended family lineage. This is the system that many African societies observe. This system is different from the western system of a nuclear family.

Oral literature of the Luhya of Western Kenya reflects the African kinship system as a close knit kind of family whereby people live together and assist one another not just as a privilege but a cultural obligation. This is true in Luhya oral narratives and even the gnomic forms of their oral literature.

Luhya children's singing games thus socialize children about the need to belong and be assimilated in one's cultural requirements and expectations. Children learn human interrelationships and blood ties with their significance. Mbiti (1969:104) has this to say on the African Kinship System:

It is kinship which controls social relationships between people in a community; it governs marital customs and regulations, it determines the behaviour of one individual towards another. Indeed this sense of kinship binds together the entire life of the 'tribe'....

These binding ties are clearly reflected in Luhya children's singing games as the children sing about their different relatives extending from mothers to grandmothers and others within the kinship system.

The singing game “kukhu” (Grandmother) highlights the significance of the extended family as mentioned in the kinship system. The first two lines are significant:

Kukhu kukhu kukhu nomukhaye x2  
(Grandmother, grandmother, grandmother is a “lady”) x2  
Kukhu yebula abandu, kukhu nomukhaye x2  
(Grandmother gave birth to people, grandmother is a lady) x2

The first two lines emphasize the importance of the grandmother, giving birth to “people”. The vernacular version has more significance particularly in the use of the word “omukhaye” which means a respected old woman in society.

The grandmother in this children’s singing game is no ordinary grandmother. Children sing about her because she has contributed to the “tree of life” within the community. The word “abandu” (people) signifies her importance within the entire community. The rhyme ends by emphasizing that the grandmother “gave birth to people” and that she is still alive.

In the Luhya community and many other African communities, elderly people were respected as they were considered the custodians of the community’s culture, assets of wisdom among others. Contribution to the community’s tree of life was paramount and everyone was expected to be part of this wheel of life.

Kinship and lineage are related. Lineage refers to the series of families from which an individual is directly descendant. Among the Luhya people, children were taught matters

of culture and also expected to know their lineage. This knowledge is subtly revealed in their dramatized poetry.

In the singing game “Papa Uwo niye wina?” (Who is your father?) the singing game begins with the soloist asking other children to identify their father and the lineage goes on to the great-grandfather of Tonde. It is important to note that in such singing games the names of the personalities mentioned may be well known within the community. They form part of the wider kinship system that the child grows in. Luhya children were taught to know and respect their blood relatives at an early age. Thus this singing game becomes part of the cultural stores of the values and norms of the community. Though dramatized by children, in this dramatization they move on to ask more questions as they get socialized in the community and expand their social world. Luhya children’s singing games therefore become representations of the Luhya indigenous culture.

The kinship system allowed for close interaction and sharing among members of the Luhya community. The society was thus modeled on the principles of solidarity and communality. Traditionally, no one was supposed to suffer from hunger while others lived in plenty. Relatives crisscrossed the terrain looking for assistance from their kinsmen. In the singing game “Mlembe yaya” (Hallo Cousin) the persona inquires from the cousin; “Where are you going?” We learn from the cousin’s answer that she is going to the aunt’s place to ask for some “little flour”. And in the conversational play song the cousin is told about the other relatives: Nabutulu and Nangikhe.

In the Luhya community, relations were/are considered very important. They form part of the wider kinship circle and are normally called upon to assist in many cases. Many things were done communally. Hence the prime importance of the various relatives.

During hard times, the kinship system was significant in helping relatives who were poor. In the singing game “Biroko ngorodi” which has no English translation from its title, the soloist leads the performers as they talk about ‘going to beg’ from relatives. The Luhya word used in the chorus is “kusuma” which means going to get assistance from relatives. It is not really “begging” since this was an accepted practice and those who were able were expected to assist relatives who were unfortunate.

In the above singing game the word “Biroko” and the last line “Ngorodi godagode ngorodi” are used to add rhythm to the game that subtly communicates the significance of the kinship system during hard times. The lead singer first mentions going for assistance at the aunt’s place then at the mother’s. During the performance of the singing game the soloist can mention as many relatives as possible and the children perform it in a line that imitates the search for mentioned relatives.

In the Luhya community, children grow up in a community set-up and are expected to know how they relate to other members of the community. Thus at a tender age they are socialized to respect these relatives.

Writing on the Yoruba children's literature, Akinyemi (2003:167) says:

This form of Yoruba children's literature... stands out as an adequate means of exercising parts of the body, thereby contributing to the physical and mental growth of the children. Furthermore, because many of the games associated with this kind of poetry have rules, they act as checks on the children...they provide avenues for socialization and adaptation.

This observation is also true of all the Luhya children's singing games since in their performance they require active participation of the performers as they subtly communicate significant values of the community. In the singing game "Ingia, ingia, chacha" (Here comes) the group of performers mentions various relatives and show their expectations from these relatives. They begin with the coming of their mother as they say:

Ingia, ingia, chacha x2  
(Here comes x2)  
Maai kecha chacha x2  
(Mother comes chacha)  
Kече ni kamabele chacha  
(She has milk chacha)

They sing about their mother bringing milk, their father coming with "meat" and their grandmother coming to tell them "stories". What the children mention as being brought by their kinspeople are quite significant. Milk is associated with the mother while meat, which is a delicacy in the community is associated with the father. It is important to note that in traditional Luhya society, men were expected to provide for their families and "meat" here symbolizes the responsible and caring father.



Traditionally the youths were told stories by their grandparents. Grandmothers played an important role of socializing girls. Girls, from a tender age were expected to sleep with their grandmothers in a traditional house called “shibinze” where they were socialized into the communal values and prepared for marriage while the boys on the other hand listened to stories from their grandfathers around a bonfire in the evenings. In the singing game, “ingia ingia” (Here comes) the performers comment on the role of their grandmother:

Kukhu kecha chacha x2  
(Grandmother comes chacha) x2  
Kecha chacha chacha  
Kecha ni chigano  
(She has good stories for us)

In their dramatization of children’s singing games, children learn more about the cultural values of the Luhya people. This learning, as many scholars concur (notably Christie, 2001, Fromberg, 1998, 2002, Hughes, 1999) cited in “Association for Childhood Education International – ACEI, 2006:1) is significant in the growth of the child. Indeed as the ACEI states:

... play a dynamic, active and constructive  
behaviour is an essential and integral part  
of all children’s healthy growth, development  
and learning across all ages, domains and cultures.

By focusing on kinship values, Luhya children’s singing games contribute to children’s social, physical and moral development. Because the dramatization of the singing games involves physical activity, they are closely related to the development and refinement of children’s mental skills and their body awareness. As they vigorously and playfully use

their bodies in physical exercise, children simultaneously refine and develop skills that enable them to feel confident, secure and self-assured.

Understanding the Luhya cultural values in children's singing games is crucial to Luhya cultural norms. The children are socialized as responsible members of their cultures. Thus Luhya children's singing games become significant to the holistic development of the Luhya children – from communicating cultural values, to physical and moral development to cognitive development.

The Luhya people blend life with children's singing games, right from a tender age. As children grow up they sing and dance and learn various issues about their culture. The Luhya have much respect for their family ties, which give them a sense of unity and belonging. Children show this unity and belonging as they sing about their kinship system.

They recognize that the destiny of their community is crucial. Children are taught a common ancestry which creates this belonging. This is clearly shown in the mentioned singing games from 'Who is your father' and the rest, 'Who is your father' creates this communality and educates children on the value of a common family tree. This family unity calls for dignity and togetherness which become crucial values in ensuring that every member of the community is taken care of.

### **2.1.3 Luhya Children's Singing Games and the Values of Friendship and Unity**

The values of friendship and unity as understood by the Luhya people cannot be delinked from the communality concept and that of kinship. As children grow up they are socialized to love their colleagues and learn to share the little that they may have. Luhya children's singing games have a variety of performances that are meant to enhance this unity and friendship.

The value of friendship is dramatized in the performance of the singing game "Saa salinganga". In this unity and friendship game, children perform as they walk around in a circle. The soloist (in most cases the older child) then calls out names of the members of the performing group and asks them to select friends from the group. The performance encourages unity and friendship as children perform in a group and appreciate each other as members of the same community. The repetition of the 'limerick' "Saa Salinganga" adds musicality to the performance thus making the game interesting.

The Luhya people encourage friendship and unity amongst its people. As noted earlier, these values are in line with their concepts of communality and kinship systems. This unity is manifested in times of crisis in the community – for example during famine, during funerals or when members of the community need assistance. It should be noted that the Luhya people lived in a clan system and this made it easy for every member of the community to identify with fellow kinsmen.

Children demonstrate the importance of this unity in their play games as they sing and dramatize the different values of the society. In the singing game 'Olukaka Lwatinya' (The fence is strong), this unity is symbolically dramatized as children hold their hands together and sing in a circle.

In his research on the Abanyole sub-community of the wider Luhya linguistic group Alembi (2000:12) has this to say about the singing game:

...there is a demonstration of the importance of being united. It involves holding hands together and symbolizes joint fighting against an enemy, pursuing an enemy together when attacked, playing, singing and laughing together.

Alembi also observes that holding hands in a circle is symbolic of the unity that exists among the children while the child inside the circle symbolizes the evil forces working against the unity.

The themes of unity, cultural identity and resistance to foreign or external invasion thus become crucial in such a symbolic performance. The dynamics of this one performance suggests a protective moral for the preservation of the community and the values that define it.

The Luhya value this kind of unity as we see in many of the community's children's singing games that focus on this important value.

In “Ndilendi lewa” (Ndilendi lewa), the soloist leads the performers in a friendship and unity performance in this singing game that is more of a limmerick. The last two lines are significant:

Solo: Ee hamba omulina  
(Ee get a friend)

All: Manase mambe owanje aah ndilewa  
(And I will get one aah ndilewa)

This friendship game is closely related to many other Luhya children’s singing games in which children perform in different styles as they emphasize friendship, unity, kinship and communality.

In “Khwenyanga Omulina” (We want a friend ) the soloist leads the performers in a performance of parallel lines facing each other. The soloist leads them as they ask for the friends they want, asking the opposite group to give them a friend.

Solo: Khwenyanga omulina x3  
(We want a friend x3)  
Omulina mwene uyo  
(That friend)

All: Omulina wenywe niwina x3  
(Who is your friend? x3)  
Omulina mwene uyo  
(That friend)

Solo: Omulina wefwe ni Awinja x3  
(Our friend is Awinja x3)  
Omulina mwene uyu  
(That friend)

All: Niwina owitsa okhumuenda?x3  
(Who will come for her?x3)  
Omulina mwene uyo  
(That friend)

Solo: Raeli yetsa okhumuenda x3

(Rachel will come for her x3)  
Omulina mwene uyo  
(That friend)

All: Sikala omwana wefwe  
(Good-bye our child)  
Sikala olie obusuma nomurele  
(Stay back and eat “ugali” with “omurele”).

In this entertaining performance, the children sing about friendship as they call upon their colleagues to select friends. The last two lines have great value to the meaning of the game. The word “omwana wefwe” (our child) signifies the importance of friendship and unity among children and to a larger extent within the entire community. Awinja is told to stay home and enjoy the local cuisine, “obusuma”, (a local bread cooked out of maize flour) and “omurele” (*corchorus olitorius*). “Omurele” is a delicious indigenous leafy vegetable food popular among the Luhya and Luo of western Kenya. The Luo call it “apoth”.

Indigenous vegetables play a significant role in many African cultures. Oyoo et al (2008) have this to say:

Indigenous leafy vegetable foods (ILVS) have always had an exceptional place in African cuisine. They differ significantly in African ethnic groups from different regions, in their styles, recipes and tastes; often reflecting respecting ethnic and class differences within these cultures.

Among the Luhya, “omurele” is a special local vegetable food which is treasured. This is entrenched in the Luhya culture and reflects many social and cultural values.

An outsider may not really understand the significance of this traditional cuisine but the Luhya view it as a unifying food that brings the community together. The vegetable food is treasured by both the Luhya and the Luo communities.

This singing game significantly links us to the theme of the environment though this is not the main focus. “Omurele” (*Corchorus Olitorius*) is treasured just as the Luhya children sing about “eshirietso” (*Erythrococca bongensis*) which they claim saved their community during famine.

Sometimes a children’s singing game on a simple theme of friendship may reveal other subtle values in the community. This is the case with the singing game “Omwicha wefwe” (Our friend) as sung among the Bukusu sub-community of the Luhya. It is important to note that this singing game cuts across all the Luhya sub-communities with little variations. The game delves into other cultural issues to do with marriage and dowry. As the children sing about their friends or who their friend is, the soloist adds:

Solo: Mercy acha okhumlela x3  
(Mercy will bring her x3)  
Omwicha mwene oyoo  
(That friend)

All: Mnakhwa engombe chinga? x3  
(How many cows shall you pay? x3)  
Omwicha mwene oyoo  
(That friend)

Solo: Khunakwa engombe ekhumi x3  
(We will pay ten cows x3)  
Omwicha mwene oyoo  
(That friend)

All: Mnakhwa esende chinga? x3  
(How much money shall you pay? x3)  
Omwene mwene oyoo  
(That friend)

Among the Luhya people when a girl got married, it was mandatory for dowry to be paid by the bridegroom's side. This dowry was paid in the form of cows. Traditionally the payment of dowry cemented and legalized the marriage. No marriage was legalized until this payment was made. However, as this singing game goes on to reveal, the bride's side is also asking for "money". This is a more contemporary development where some money has to accompany the traditional payment in the form of cows.

This singing game attests to the fact that children's singing games, just like the rest of literature, is flexible and keeps on adapting to the changing societal values. Indeed, as Finnegan (1970) has noted, it is this flexibility and adaptability of African oral literature that has kept it alive through the centuries. As societal values keep on changing because of interaction with other cultures, oral literature adapts in order to reflect these changing values.

The theme of friendship is continued in the singing game "Chamcha mleta" (We go bring) "mulina wanje" (My friend) and "Hamba mulina" (Come, friend). In "chamcha mleta" (we go bring) both boys and girls perform together in a group as they call upon their friends. This group performance of both sexes encourages respect for one another at the same time socializing both boys and girls in the communal values. The children emphasize the word "choice" to signify the importance of having the right friend. Choice



of right friends is seen as paramount in instilling the right values so that children grow as responsible members of the community. This also hints at later choices that they make as adults when it comes to marriage.

In “Mulina wanje” (My friend) Luhya children are involved in an entertaining performance. They kneel down in a circle with the group leader at the centre. They sing as they thump their hands on the ground. Whoever is called upon to stand up is expected to dance a traditional jig that involves “shaking shoulders”. This game may go on and on as different children are called upon to stand up and make the jig as they go around the circle. They exercise and also socialize and learn. The best dancer is applauded by the group and appreciated. The entertainment element of this performance is enhanced by the refrain, “auuwi chachacha”.

In the singing game “Hamba Mulina” (come friend) children get involved in an entertaining limerick that ends up communicating the value of friendship and unity. Again the emphasis is that children have to make the right choice of friends.

Soloist: “Nuhamba Uhambe mulahi”  
(If you choose, choose a good one)

The refrain “Ha dereva” is a nonsense phrase that cannot be translated but only serves to add rhythm and rhyme to the performance thus making it more entertaining since children of all ages enjoy music.

Many Luhya children’s singing games, apart from those sampled for discussion in this sub-section, emphasize the need for unity and friendship. These values are emphasized

for the sake of the community's solidarity and identification. The singing games that dramatize friendship and unity delve into the aesthetics of this community that are used to socialize and educate its children.

Through children's singing games, many values of the Luhya people are enacted and sung out by children. The singing games on friendship and unity emphasize choice of friends, collective work and respect for one another. Through the singing games children gain educational lessons necessary for their assimilation into the Luhya community.

Though the singing games are performed in different settings, they still emphasize what the society considers as good for its children. It is interesting, however, to note that children do perform alone in their games but still reflect societal norms, aspirations, aesthetics and expectations.

#### **2.1.4 Luhya Children's Singing Games and Gender Roles**

Gender roles are reflected in children's singing games in different ways. In her paper entitled "Sex differences in the complexity of children's play and games" Janet Lever (1978: 481-482) makes some significant findings and conclusions:

Children's socialization is assumed to have consequences for their later lives... during play children develop numerous social skills that enable them to enjoy group membership in a community of peer. One implication of this research is that boys' greater exposure to complex games may give them an advantage in occupational milieus....

This observation presupposes that through games, children are sometimes socialized in different ways. This is because literature tends to emphasize particular gender roles as perceived in a society.

In the case of the Luhya people, it is true that children's singing games tend to reflect certain gender roles as perceived in the society. It is significant to note that the Luhya were/are a typically patriarchal community with a clear definition of roles that tend to differentiate women/girls from men/boys. In this sub-section we look at a sample of these singing games that tend to define roles on the basis of gender.

In the singing game "Kaloti" (Zig zag) Luhya children perform in a line as they move following the leader – the leader also acts as the soloist:

Solo: Mama yalingi omulongi wetsindabu x2  
(My mother was a potter x2)

All: Koloti x2  
(Zig-zag x2)

Solo: Khulonde yaa  
(Let us take this route)

All: Koloti  
(Zig-zag)

Solo: Khutsile yaa  
(Go through here)

All: Koloti  
(Zig-zag)

In this game the role of a potter is linked to the woman. Traditionally Luhya potters were women. They went around from village to village selling their ware particularly pots of various shapes used for different purposes. The performers in this singing game imitate the movement of a potter who traverses different villages looking for buyers of her pots. Pottery among the Luhya was mainly associated with the Abanyole sub-community. Potters from this sub-community sold their ware among other Luhya sub-communities and also to the neighbouring ethnic groups such as the Abagusii, the Luo and the Kalenjin.

This singing game is based on the imitation of the surrounding that is a crucial element of the child's learning. What is interesting is that in what seems to be a natural imitation of the environment, the children's performance reveals subtle gender roles and occupation within the society of the child.

In the singing game "Kweya" (Sweeping) the performers, both boys and girls, perform in a group as they imitate the sweeping of a house. In this group performance the children make some significant observations:

Mayi niye khweya  
(My mother is the one who sweeps)

Kamanya khweya nyumba  
(She knows how to sweep the house)

Kukhu niye khweya  
(My grandmother is the one who sweeps)

Kamanya khweya nyumba  
(She knows how to sweep the house)

Khukweyeresya, khweya inyuma nende akachi  
mwokhutekha

(In good sweeping, you sweep behind and around the  
cooking place)

In this children's singing game, children again make observations based on their day to day lives.

In the Luhya community, there was strict division of roles and each individual knew what the society expected of him or her. Being a patriarchal society, women were in a way marginalized and associated with child-bearing and the kitchen. Apart from other feminine occupations like pottery, story telling, weaving, Luhya women were expected to take care of their husbands and children by maintaining the cleanliness of the house. They were the ones who did sweeping and took care of the "cooking place". Today this strict division of roles is changing as many women have been empowered through education (western education) and other organizations that deal with the empowerment of women and the girl child.

However, it is true that many women, particularly the rural women still culturally and religiously identify with these gender roles. In the singing game the performers associate "sweeping of the house" with women – their mother and grandmother. They also talk about "good sweeping" as being one that takes care of the "cooking place". These terms and phrases are highly symbolic and associate the female with the kitchen.

In the game “Naliaka cha musokoni” (Naliaka please go to the market) again children assign certain roles to girls. Naliaka is sent to the market to buy salt. This singing game brings in the importance of salt. Salt is associated with the ‘kitchen’ and the fact that it is Naliaka who is sent to the market reveals how children, even in their natural singing games, may reflect the aesthetics of a particular society in terms of gender roles.

Though boys would be sent to the market, there were certain things that were traditionally associated with girls and thus only girls were sent to buy them: these include salt, vegetables, cooking fat among others. As noted earlier, however, the roles are gradually changing as boys and girls are nowadays socialized to respect each other as equal. Indeed, today many roles are not associated with particular genders though it is not uncommon to find certain gender stereotypes adhered to in certain Luhya rural settings.

Children’s singing games thus become important agents of socializing both boys and girls in the cultural patterns, roles and expectations of a particular community. Brady (quoted in Wharton-Boyd, 1983:51-52) for instance, believes that the socialization of young black (African-Americans) females can be analysed through their play. She writes:

Already at eight, these girls are learning through play, the significance of the group solidarity. The rules which structure the play itself (circular formation, turn-taking at being middle player, clapping in rhythm, singing in unison etc) when related at different level, can reveal the social significance of this play.

Landner (1971) and Abrahams (1969) (cited in Wharton-Boyd, (1983:52-53) also comment on the socialization elements in children's play. Landner suggests that the young black girls are consciously socialized into the roles of womanhood when they are seven or eight years old. The principal role models are mothers, older sisters and teachers.

These observations are true in many African settings. Indeed the Luhya boys and girls are assimilated into the Luhya cultural pattern and superstructure of aesthetics through the roles they take and sing about in their singing games.

The singing game "Omukhana" (A girl) which is a choral singing game performed by Luhya children, children sing and dramatize about a girl who walks proudly with a "basket full of eggs" on her head. She proudly dances "Ting ting" and greets a fellow girl. This simple verse delves into the issue of gender roles, particularly those assigned to girls. "Simwero" is a traditional basket that is carried on the head. Traditionally, this basket was only carried by women and girls. It was seen and viewed as unheard of to find a man or a boy carrying this basket on his head. The basket was strictly associated with females and women's roles.

In this game the girl proudly makes a jig when carrying the traditional basket (made out of reeds). This signifies the socialization of girls to be proud of their roles (in the traditional set up). This traditional basket is fast disappearing from the Luhya community as leather bags and bags made out of synthetic fibre are taking over.

The materials for making and weaving this traditional basket are also becoming scarce as many natural forests are being destroyed for agricultural and settlement purposes.

Among the Luhya people, there were certain things that were supposed to be done by women/girls and others by men/boys. This division of labour also extended to foods. There were certain types of foods that women were forbidden from eating: including certain parts of chicken, meat, beef and others. In the game “kokorioko” which imitates the sound made by a cock, the group of performers answer to the soloist call:

All: Olubaaya, lubaya langwe x2  
(A wing, my wing)

Esiyembukanga bakhana  
(Am wondering at girls)

Ngabalia engokho alala nolubaya – Kutu! x2  
(How they eat chicken with Wings – Kutu! x2)

Traditionally Luhya and Luo women were not allowed to eat wings and the gizzard of chicken. The gizzard was specifically for the “owner of the house” or the first born son in the family, if the father was absent. There is no clear justification for this discrimination though members of the Luhya and Luo communities have many superstitions that relate to different types of food and gender.

### **2.1.5 Luhya Children’s Singing Games on other Themes and Issues**

Other Luhya children singing games communicate various values that are contextualized and can only be ethnopoetically analysed within the cultural norms, aesthetics and



aspirations of the Luhya people. Some of these singing games touch on animals and their products in society, e.g. “Amabele” (milk) which touches on the importance of a cow in the community.

“Ndalia Obubwe” (I ate his bread) focuses on food and particularly the traditional sorghum bread. This shows a special liking of traditional food even in the dramatized children’s singing games. Other singing games are mainly meant for entertainment as they capitalize on rhyme and rhythm to entertain children and socialize them.

Vices such as theft are condemned in games such as “Onyando Nakhebi” (Onyando the little thief). There are also singing games that are about animals within the environment of the child. These include “Isimba” (lion), “Ing’ombe” (cow), “Ingoko” (hen) and others. Others imitate the sounds made by animals as in “ing’ombe irira” – the cow mooed. Chapter three looks at many of these singing games, their performance style and meaning within the cultural settings of the Luo and Luhya people of Kenya.

## **2.2 Luo Children’s Singing Games**

Like the Luhya, Luo children have elaborate singing games performed during their free time. These singing games are part of the Luo Children’s oral literature and reflect the aesthetic values of the Luo people from different dimensions. As the Luo children entertain themselves by dramatizing their poetry, the games communicate subtle issues concerning the Luo society, the Luo children and even the neighbouring communities. In

this section we look at the aesthetic value communication as dramatized in selected Luo children's singing games.

### **2.2.1 Luo Children's Singing Games on the Value of Hard Work**

Among the Luo people, hard work is praised while laziness is condemned. The Luo believe that it is only through hard work that families can sustain themselves and support their dependants. The Luo discourage any form of laziness that may lead to begging. Traditionally, the Luo were a proud people and each individual endeavoured to live the best life. Thus relatives were discouraged from relying on kinsmen for survival. Indeed, many Luo proverbs discourage this and call for independence. This value is for instance communicated in the Luo proverb, "thier mak owadu ok mon nindo" (your brother's poverty cannot stop you from sleeping).

Though the Luo lived a communal existence, each individual was encouraged not to depend on kinsmen's wealth, hence such proverbs like, "Don't depend on your brother's fortune".

This aesthetic value is subtly communicated in the Luo children's singing games that discourage and even condemn laziness. The children's dramatized rhyme "Oyundi" (sparrow) is succinct on this. A sparrow is a small destructive bird found in western Kenya. The bird is known for destroying grains. The Luo were traditionally fishermen, farmers and pastoralists. In this singing game the sparrow is personified to symbolize a lazy person.

The Luo children satirize the lazy people who do not want to work hard but feed on others' sweat:

- First: Oyundi ni dhi ing'weti  
(Sparrow go and gather vegetables)
- Second: Oyundo ni tienda lit  
(Sparrow says my leg is sick)
- First: Oyundi ni dhi imoti  
(Sparrow go and collect firewood)
- Second: Oyundi ni tienda lit  
(Sparrow says my leg is sick)
- First: Oyundi ni dhi iluoki  
(Sparrow go and wash)
- Second: Oyundi ni tienda lit  
(Sparrow says my leg is sick)
- First: Oyundi ni dhi kulo  
(Sparrow go and fetch water)
- Second: Oyundi ni tienda lit  
(Sparrow says my leg is sick)
- First: Oyundi ni dhi iregi  
(Sparrow go and grind flour)
- Second: Oyundi ni tienda lit  
(Sparrow says my leg is sick)
- First: Oyundi ni bi chiem  
(Sparrow come and eat)
- Second: Oyundi ni "sesese"  
Sparrow "sesese"

This children's singing game is significant in its reflection of many cultural values among the Luo people. Children perform the game in a group and end up dramatizing the

onomatopoeic movement of the “sparrow” when called upon to come and join others at the table. The repetition of the sparrow’s response “my leg is sick” creates a cumulative effect in the singing game thus creating the musicality that appeals to children of all ages.

In this game the sparrow is used to symbolize the lazy in the community. The sparrow avoids all chores that he/she is asked to do: gathering vegetables, collecting firewood, washing clothes, grinding flour. However, when asked to come and eat the sparrow rejoices. This happiness is symbolically communicated in the last line “sparrow sesese”. The “sesese” sound imitates the noise that the sparrow’s wings make as it destroys grains.

Within the singing game, it is significant to note that the performers imitate the sparrow and dramatize many traditional roles that Luo children were expected to perform. Roles such as fetching water, collecting firewood, washing clothes, and even grinding millet on the traditional stone were mainly performed by children, especially girls. The grinding of millet was done under the supervision of an adult as children were taught traditional roles. However, today, because of the grinding mills this traditional role has changed but girls still go to the mill to grind grain, especially in the rural areas.

This singing game condemns laziness and satirizes those individuals who are anti-social and unwilling to perform their traditional duties but are willing to partake of the community’s products of hard work. This message comes out clearly in other genres of Luo oral literature where the lazy are condemned and in others where reliance on kinsmen’s wealth is viewed as a sure recipe for disaster.

The theme of laziness is further highlighted and condemned in the singing games “Janyawo” (lazy boy) and “Nyanyawo” (lazy girl).

In the former, Luo children sing about a lazy boy who remains at home with the mother but when asked to assist with home chores he laughs stupidly:

Janyawo wanyieri  
(Lazy boy we laugh at you)  
Odong e dala,  
(He remains at home)

Kamin mare kone nyathina konya  
(When the mother asks him to help her)  
Onyiero ni ha ha ha  
(He laughs ha, ha, ha,)

Kane bed ni otegno  
(If he was strong)

Dikoro ober  
(He would have been good)

In the Luo traditional set-up, children were expected to assist their parents in all home chores. Indeed this expectation was carried on to adulthood as even adult sons were expected to fully support their parents. The concept of a home for the old was not in the Luo community. Even today Luos are not expected to take their elderly parents to a home for the old. It is considered a taboo.

Luo children were socialized to understand their responsibilities right from a tender age. In the above children’s singing game the performers subtly ridicule the boy who sits at

home without helping the mother. This character is attributed to him being lazy hence the last lines “If he was strong he would have been good”.

In the latter game, “Nyanyawo” (lazy girl) Luo children even carry their condemnation of the lazy people to a further level:

Nyanyawo yuak kotwe kore koneno pur owuok  
(The lazy girl cries bandaging her chest when digging  
is around)

Janyawo yuak kotwe wiye koneno pur owuok  
(The lazy girl cries bandaging her head when digging  
comes)

Ni denda otimo tuo  
(my body is sick)

An piny oserana  
(I am bewitched.)

The satirized girl in the singing game gives all excuses so that she does not join the family in hoeing the land. She feigns sickness and even claims to be bewitched.

In this dramatized verse, Luo children satirize those individuals who are lazy and look for all excuses so as to avoid participating in community or family work. Traditionally the hoeing season was a season of hard work where all family members went to their land and prepared it for the planting season. The claim of the girl that she is “bewitched” can be understood within the culture of the Luo people. The girl says “An piny oserana” (The “world” has bewitched me).

It was believed in the Luo society that there were individuals who practised sorcery and were therefore harmful and could do evil to others. Such individuals were literally feared and people kept away from them.

Through Luo children's singing games, Luo values on hard work clearly come out. Children do internalize these values in their own free time. As Wharton-Boyd (1983:56) observes:

...the use of singing games allows children to work at various levels of abilities, creates an atmosphere of working together to acquire communication skills, develops thinking patterns and provides knowledge from collective experience.

Luo children acquire all these skills at the same time commenting on their cultural values in a creative manner. Young people learn that laziness is a vice while hard work is a virtue. Those who could have developed the vice of laziness are thus re-directed towards what the community considers as virtue. As adults later, the children are able to contribute positively to the society and the nation at large.

### **2.2.2 Luo Children's Singing Games and the Imitation of the Surrounding**

A people's aesthetics and values are in a way reflected in their thinking and the manner in which they relate to their physical and social environments. The Luo people of Nyanza Province of Kenya are River-Lake Nilotes who stay around the shores of Lake Victoria. Their relationship with the lake, water and water animals thus becomes part of their aesthetics and is creatively revealed in their oral literature. Luo children's singing games

reflect this aesthetic value system in terms of the Luo's immediate environment and the community's relationship with this physical environment.

Indeed as Sauer ([www.jugendtheater.net](http://www.jugendtheater.net)) correctly observes, everything which children play begins with a side view of what has been seen and experienced:

One can compare children to craftsmen when describing the way children perceive their encounters of the world around them. First they find the pieces, put them together or take them apart in the attempt to form an objective. Similarly, they are like researchers or constructors. A child observes, registers and compares its observations with acquired experience... mimesis is the human ability to project one's inner pictures,... events and stories.

These observations are true of Luo children's singing games. This genre reflects the Luo child's imitation and observation of his/her immediate environment and the flora and fauna within it. The game 'Ng'ielo" (python) is an imitation of the slithering movement of the python. It is important to note that pythons are common around the shores of Lake Victoria. Indeed, in the past, pythons were almost given a religious perspective. This is not only among the Luo people but even among the Igbo of Nigeria as Chinua Achebe creatively reveals in his classic novel, *Arrow of God*. The coming of the missionaries in Igbo land interfered with the Igbo traditional beliefs. The first African converts to Christianity started deviating from their traditional practices and beliefs. Hence in the novel, Oduche, after converting to Christianity, tries to suffocate the sacred python.



The Luo also had a religious view of the python. In some places like Nyakach of south Nyanza, the python could not be killed. It was viewed as a blessing and associated with many other beliefs. Luo children imitate the python's movement as they sing in a line.

In some villages, it was not unique to find a python that had strayed into someone's house:

Solo:	Ka omako ng'ato (If it catches one)
All:	N'gielo Jagodhre x2 (Python the meanderer x2)
Solo:	Ne opowore eod maro. (He strays into mother-in-law's house)
All:	Rateng sesegere powe (The black one "sesegere powe")

In this children's singing game the python is depicted as a respector of no one's house. It even enters the mothers-in-law's house. The mention of the mother-in-law's house gives this singing game a more symbolic representation. Mothers-in-law were highly respected in the Luo community and no one could just stray into their houses. In fact in some cases sons-in-laws had to avoid meeting their mothers-in-law.

Culturally, this was viewed as a means of maintaining respect with mothers-in-law. In this simple children's game, the deeper meaning satirizes those weird members of the society who behave like "pythons" in their slithering movements. The sly and shameless members, who sometimes do wicked things like showing no respect to those whom the

community views as special are satirized. We will delve more into the style employed in this singing game in chapter three.

In the singing game “mumi gocho” (The catfish plays) Luo children imitate and sing about their immediate environment. Being inhabitants of the shores of the Lake, Luo children were exposed to various types of fish. In this game they sing about catfish, mudfish, and dagger (‘omena’). These three are delicacies in Luo culture.

All the three types of fish are found in Lake Victoria. The children even nickname one of them, “sire” (mudfish) whom they claim is the “captain”. Thus the fishes’ swimming in water and mud is paralleled to a soccer game which has its captain. The ‘dagger’ are the smallest fish in Lake Victoria. When caught in the net they splash up and down and finally die when off shore. Luo children refer to their movement as dancing “twist”. Twist was a traditional dance of the 1960’s and early 70’s and is associated with the late musician Daudi Kabaka among others.

The imitation of the fauna around the Lake is further shown in the singing game “Rao rao rabet”(Hippo, hippo the big). Luo children sing:

Rao rao rabet gino okalo kaa  
(Hippo hippo the big animal passes here.)

Wololo wololo wololo  
(Wololo wololo wololo.)

Mano en maduong  
(That is a very big animal.)

Gino nyono piny matek

(That animal stamps the ground)

Many parts of the shores of Lake Victoria are inhabited by hippopotamuses. These Luo regions include parts of Nyando District, Homabay and Rachuonyo Districts. Luo children wonder at the size of the hippo. The refrain, “wololo, wololo, wololo” expresses their amazement.

In some parts of Luo – Nyanza hippos are known to be destructive to crops and in some cases even human life. In this singing game, Luo children note how the hippo “stamps the ground”.

Literature reflects a peoples values and environment – hence its being referred to as a “mirror of life”. It does reflect a slice of a people’s life. The images that occur in Luo children’s singing games are a reflection of their keen observation of their immediate environment and also their vivid imagination reflected in their creative communication. All children in all cultures do get fascinated by their environment. This fascination creatively comes out in their imitations and role-plays.

Akinyemi (2003:166) shows how Yoruba children of Nigeria show their fascination with the environment through their oral poetry. He gives an example of the Yoruba children’s performance of the singing game “Ekunmeran (The leopard catches the goat). In this creative game, the Yoruba children imitate how a leopard catches a goat. They stretch out their hands to catch their colleagues’ from the other side of the performance formation.

Imitation of animals within the child's environment is also common among the Luo children. Luo children do not just sing about the water animals in the Lake or around the shores of Lake Victoria but also about the animals in their surrounding. In the singing game "Atung' Rombo" (horned Sheep) the children sing about the horned sheep particularly the manner in which it plays ("dances"). The other game "Nyarombo" (The lamb) not only imitates the sound produced by the lamb but goes on to touch on other foods and animals within the locale of the Luo child:

Leader:	Acham godo obuolo (We eat it with mushrooms)
Players:	Mee (Mee)
Leader:	Obuolo ma Milambo (Mushrooms from the south)
Players:	Mee (Mee)
Leader:	Ocham go mwanda (So that we can eat deer meat)
Players:	Mee (Mee)
Leader:	Mwanda ma milambo (A deer from south)

In the singing game, the children mention mushrooms as coming from the "south" and also the deer meat also from the south. All these are things that children see in their

surrounding. The mention of the south here suggests ‘South Nyanza’ since this singing game was collected from Siaya and Kisumu Districts which are in the North.

The reflection of the child’s immediate environment is also dramatized in the game, “Owang’ winyo ma nyaksure” (The crested crane bird).

The Luo children in the above singing game dramatize how the crested crane flaps its wings and proudly dances:

Solo:	Winyo ma nyaksure (The Crested Bird) Owang’ winyo ma nyaksure (Crane the crested)
Chorus:	Kadhano x2 (Like a human being x2)
Solo:	Winyo go buombe The bird flaps its wings
Chorus:	Kadhano x2 (Like a human being x2)
Solo:	Winyo ma jasunga (The proud bird)
Solo:	Owang’ winyo ma jasunga (Crane the proud bird)

This is a dramatization that imitates the animals in the child’s immediate environment. Dramatization and the imitation of animals is significant to the child’s intellectual development. Indeed, as Tucker (1981) observes, animals symbolize various things to

children. Children move into fantasy and the imitation of animals carry children into a different world. The animals also symbolize to them adults who they associate within day-to-day life. In the above game, Luo children sing about the behaviour of the crested crane bird which they view as being similar to that of human beings – particularly its proud character shown in its meticulous dancing as it flaps its wings.

Apart from singing about the crane bird, Luo children also sing about the “Owl” (Tula). The owl is not a popular bird in Luo culture. It is viewed as a bird of bad omen. The Luo believe that this bird cannot be seen during the day and that it is a sign of misfortune to see it during the day. If it perches on one’s roof and hoots it even becomes worse. Villagers abhor its presence and hooting. However, Luo children sing about how the owl “builds” its house with wood and warns against its “scratch”. This “scratch” by the owl is viewed as more harmful than that of any other bird. This can ethnopoetically be attributed to the position of this bird in Luo culture – particularly the community’s superstitions about the bird.

The owl is indeed a unique bird that resembles the cat – its face – hence the community’s wonder at it and the bad omen associated with it. Thus the role of fauna and flora in Luo children’s singing games reflect the Luo environment and also aesthetic values. As Ogutu (in Indangasi et. al.2006;53 notes:

It is argued that the presence of the flora and fauna in discourse through their presence in proverbs (and other genres, of course) is a means of environmental conservation.

Luo children's singing games have a repertoire of flora and fauna in them. It is important to observe that apart from commenting on the immediate environment, Luo children communicate the values and aesthetics of the various flora and fauna within the world view of their community.

### **2.2.3 Luo Children's Singing Games on the Significance of Traditional Foods**

Studies carried out in various parts of Africa show that African indigenous vegetables play a significant role in the food security of many communities and that the indigenous vegetables are associated with the beliefs and practices of the people ( Oyoo et.al., 2008).

As Oyoo et.al. (2008) observe, the importance of indigenous leafy vegetables is stressed culturally; they enter and appear in different genres of oral literature including children's singing games. In the game, "chiemo mit ka bii ne" (Food is sweet here, come and see)

Luo children sing about the "greens" and their nutritious significance:

Chiemo mit ka bii ine  
(Food is sweet here, come and see)  
Chwakoga mochiek mochwing  
(Boiled edibly and soft)

Kado kichwako monchwing  
(Soup when well prepared)

Dendi dwago kare chuth,  
(Gives the body its true shape)

Lwok alot, tedi kwon mochick  
(Wash the greens and prepare well-cooked Ugali)

Billie ara ine dendi  
(Taste it and see your body)

Dwogo kare chuth  
(Takes its true shape).

In this game, Luo children comment on the importance of indigenous leafy vegetables for their nutritional value at the same time asking their friends to prepare meals well. Though a children's singing game, the singing game is informative on the need to prepare meals well and the health implications thereof. This is important since many indigenous leafy vegetables grow as wild herbs and some may be found in dirty environments. To avoid infection by diseases it is important to cook them well. "Wash the greens and prepare them well", the children's singing game advises. The game talks about "kuon" (ugali) – the local bread made out of maize, sorghum or millet flour. This is a staple food among the Luo and Luhya of Western Kenya. It is best served with green vegetables.

Oyoo et. al. (2008:62) comment:

The complexity of vegetable preparation and the number of complimentary food items presented depend on whether the meal is to be eaten as a snack or as the main meal of the day. Traditional concepts of vegetable diet had associations with health. Eating "a lot mofuo" or poorly cooked vegetable, stale or cold leftover foods can lead to illness or death.

Indeed other forms of Luo oral literature comment on the significance of preparing traditional food well. There are specific proverbs relating to the cooking of vegetables: "a lot ok bul" meaning you cannot "roast" vegetables – where "roasting" means cooking hurriedly and carelessly, "a lot ni otwon gi chumbi mojaw piny, kwoyo ra dore e" which literally means that the vegetable dish is sandy, implying that it is poorly cooked.



Some traditional foods were preserved in a special way so as to be nutritious. In the Luo children's singing game, 'Adila mit' (sour milk is sweet) children sing about the traditionally prepared sour milk. This milk is normally kept and fermented in "Adila" (traditional pot). In the singing game children comment on the sweetness of this milk preserved and fermented in the traditional pot:

Adila mit kitwomo,  
(Sour milk cream is sweet when you scoop)

Kitwome go ogombe  
(When you scoop with a cup)

Awinja ka chunya dwaro,  
(Awinja when I desire sour milk)

Jaber atwon nee Adila  
(The beautiful one keeps it in Adila)  
Jomoko wachoni mbuta go omena  
(Some people say that Nile Perch and dagger)

Gin chiemo mojoga, mbuta dum na ahinya.  
(Is food that they hate, Nile Perch has a strong scent.)

Apart from commenting on the traditional sour milk fermented in a traditional pot, children also comment on other foods such as Nile perch and dagger ('omena'). They contrast the two last ones with the sweetness of traditionally fermented milk.

In her study of the Ghanaian playground songs, Dzansi (2002: 13) makes significant observations that are also true of Luo children's singing games:

It appears children are 'just playing' and their playground repertoire does not matter, but when interpreted and analyzed the customs and practices that underlie them are rich sources of cultural significance.

Luo children's singing games, especially the music, the performance style and the text are typical representations of the Luo indigenous culture.

The singing game "Akuru Nyabondo" (Pigeon daughter of Bondo) continues with the children's reflection and dramatization of the sweetness of traditionally fermented milk. In this game the performers ask the pigeon to give them "some cream" to put in the milk 'churn' so that it can yield sweet milk. It is important to note here that among the Luo people milk was fermented in "Adila" (a traditional Pot) or a churn (a traditional gourd). To make the milk sweeter, certain additives were included. The children delve in fantasy by asking the pigeon from Bondo to provide them with the cream to make the milk sweeter.

Luo children's singing games are part of a larger culture and thus manifest a great deal of what goes on in the macro community of the Luo as far as beliefs, values, identity and meaning are concerned. These singing games are based on everyday living and experiences of the Luo people.

#### **2.2.4 Luo Children's Singing Games on the Values of Friendship and Traditional Roles**

Many Luo children's singing games creatively comment on the Luo beliefs on friendship and also separation of roles within the Luo cultural set-up. Friendship is a virtue that connects the society together. Children are socialized to be friendly to people around them so that their interaction with them is positive.

On the issue of division of roles, the traditional Luo society was strict and everyone knew his/her role within the family and the wider community. There was no conflict between genders since this was clearly defined in the Luo unwritten cultural constitution. This constitution was passed from generation to generation with little variation until the advent of colonialism, Christianity and Western Education that drastically shifted the roles.

In the game “Wadwaro osiepwa” (we want our friend) children divide themselves in two groups and play as they dramatize the need to have friends. Group A asks for a friend and group B responds by asking them to identify the friend they want. They identify one and pull her from the other group. The game ends as group B bids “Achieng” (the friend) goodbye and reminds her to “go and cook soft ugali”.

This simple singing game foreshadows the future roles of girls as Achieng is told to go and cook “soft ugali”. Underlying the superficial communication in the game is the deeper message of preparing for future roles. This singing game is performed by children across Luo land. It is significant that the game is performed by both boys and girls. This enhances their socialization thus making them responsible members of the community.

Many nonsense singing games (limericks) among the Luo children, such as “Marobo”, “bad yien” (A ring) “Matunda” (Fruits) “Nyako nyingi ng’awa?” (Girl, what’s your name?) encourage friendship as children rejoice together. Such singing games capitalize on rhythm and rhyme to create the singability of the games thus entertaining children of

all ages. However, as Dzansi (2002) has observed in her study of the Ghanaian children's playground songs, apart from the nonsense syllables or meaningless songs, the texts of children's singing games are significant as they reflect a people's culture, aspirations and aesthetics.

Indeed, children's singing games like "Nyako nyingi ng'awa" (Girl what is your name?) cannot really be dismissed or described as a pure limmerick. Though it has many nonsense syllables and words used to create rhyme and rhythm, the singing game delves into other critical issues in the Luo community. The phrase "Kadumbele paska" is a nonsense refrain that cannot be translated but the message in the game is that Auma has other relations such as her brother Onyango. This is significant in reminding the child that he/she is not an island but belongs to a wider kinship system. Many other Luo children's singing games reveal the Luo practices on the division of labour between genders and also people of different ages. Division of labour as depicted in the singing games is a way of socializing children and also educating them in matters of culture.

In the game "Dhako" (woman) Luo children sing as they dramatize:

Dhako kia ng'weto alot  
(Woman doesn't know how to pick vegetables)

Kado bende chwak mooching  
(Boil the soup properly)

Tim kamae mondo ine  
(Do this and see)

Ka joma ipidho omere kuon.  
(How your dependants enjoy the ugali.)

The singing game gives the woman a great role in bringing up the family. She is reminded to pick vegetables well and prepare good “Ugali”. The last line of the game reminds the woman “to prepare a good meal and see how her dependants enjoy ‘ugali’.” The Luo version “ka joma ipidho omere kuon” (your dependants get “drunk” with ugali) signifies over-enjoyment and satisfaction as a result of eating a nice meal.

Traditionally it was Luo women who were given the responsibility of bringing up children. Though the “man” was viewed as the “head” of the family, the woman remained paramount as the backbone of the growth and development of the family. She took care of children and was directly involved in shaping their future. Many Luo narratives refer to the woman as “kit mikayi” the corner stone of the family. Though roles are changing due to Western education, Christianity and the advent of the career woman, it is evident that many rural Luo women still subscribe to this traditional role.

Many Luo children’s singing games link the values of kinship and roles given to various members of the society. For example, when they talk about a grandmother, they at the same time comment on her role within their set-up. In the game “Dana korirego?” (Grandma, you are grinding?) the leader of the group leads the performers in a conversational dramatization of the role of the grandmother. The grandmother responds to the question, “My grandmother are you grinding?” affirmatively and reveals that she is grinding millet flour to make “ugali” with Nile Perch.

In Luo culture, before the advent of grinding mills, the Luos had a flat stone that was used for grinding grain. The grain was put on the stone and a small flat stone was used to grind it. Grandmothers (the elderly) were experts at this and in many cases they were the ones who guided young girls in the grinding process. In this children's singing game, the leader of the performance goes on to enquire:

- Leader: Irego kuon ga ng'o wa?  
(What are you grinding the millet to eat with?)
- Group: Arego kuon gi mbuta  
(I am grinding to eat with ugali and Nile Perch.)
- Leader: Ng'ama no mi-i?  
(Who gave you?)
- Group: Wuon pacho  
(The man of the homestead -my husband.)
- Leader: Wuon pacho mana winjo ni nyang' omako cha?  
(The one whom I heard that was caught by a crocodile?)
- Group: Iwacho adier?  
(Are you telling the truth?)
- Leader: Awacho adier  
(Yes, I am telling the truth)
- Group: Iwacho adier?  
(Are you telling the truth?)
- Uwi-i chuora, aaah uwi-i chuora chuora ma wuon pacho  
ema nyang omako – eh!  
(Uwi-i my husband, aaa uwi-i my husband the head of the  
home is the one the crocodile got hold of!)

In this conversational group performance children reveal various values of the Luo people. The role of the grandmother is clearly reflected. Grandmothers, the elderly, were viewed as custodians of the traditions and customs of the Luo people. When she grinds flour, it is all for the sake of the family including her grandchildren. The role of the man

(“wuon pacho”) as a provider is indirectly revealed. The performance rises and ends on a climax as the children tease “their grandmother” on the disappearance of her husband: that he has been caught by a crocodile. This teasing makes the group turn into wailing as the performance reaches its climax thus bringing it to the end.

In this simple performance, we see the complimentary role of the grandmother and grandfather in the bringing up of the family and community at large. The group role-playing the grandmother re-enacts the grinding situation which ends up in wailing as they mourn the said disappearance of the “husband”. The mourning line at the end is quite significant as it communicates more on the values of the Luo people, particularly the significance of the man within a family and the community as a whole.

In the Luo community dead people were mourned differently, for instance when an old man passed on, the wailing in the village announced the death of an old man. Mourning for young people was different. Children of tender age were not really mourned by loud wailing, particularly when they were from a couple that was still in the childbearing age. It was believed that if children were mourned, then the couple would not have other children.

The sound of wailing signaled the kind of death being mourned. And the villagers knew exactly the kind of death being announced. In cases of people who committed suicide, the announcement was made silently through messengers since such death was not officially mourned. In fact a person who committed suicide was hurriedly buried outside

the compound since this was seen as a bad omen. Such an individual lost his/her identity in the community for no one could name his/her children after her/him.

This is the case in Grace Ogot's short story *Tekayo* in which the once-respected old man, Tekayo, turns cannibalistic and when he is caught he hangs himself. The writer reveals that Tekayo's name would disappear for ever. In Nigeria, the Igbo also had no respect for a person who committed suicide. In Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*, the protagonist, Okonkwo, commits suicide at the end of the novel. One of the characters in the novel comments that Okonkwo will be buried 'like a dog'.

These cross cultural references show that African cultural values have a lot of similarities: from the East to West and to South Africa. Among the Luo people of Kenya, children's singing games reveal Luo cultural values as children play and role-play their observations on human beings and the general flora and fauna.

Though children imitate and role-play the adult world, they discard the rules and conventions invented by adults. Children are at home in their own world of make-believe and role-play. Such a world is safe, reassuring and in line with the child's world view.

Luo children's singing games are educative and reveal a lot about the Luo people. In the singing game, "Atis Atugna" (Atis let me play) children dance as they sing and dramatize the role of Atis (a nickname for Atieno). The game enumerates the role of Atis: these roles were traditionally played by girls, hence the use of the repeated name Atis. ( a nickname for Atieno – a girl born at night).



Though the singing game's first lines focus on playing, the preceeding ones parallel play with other roles that young girls were expected to play:

Atis atugna, Atis atugna, Atis x2  
(Atis let me play, Atis let me play, Atis x2)

This first line emphasizes play and therefore brings children together. As they play the other lines of the singing game remind them of the important roles they are expected to play in the society. The play and the significance of different roles continued in the other game "Awino", again a girl's name.

In this singing game girls play as they perform and role-play the responsibilities expected of Awino: getting millet, grinding millet, cooking. The last line of each stanza: "Awino Nyathiwa" (Awino my sister) emphasizes Awino's roles at the same time showing that the performers are friends. Depending on how the children dramatize it, it may also signify a lament by the performers on the many roles that Awino has.

Luo children's singing games comment on the issues of gender roles and also the values of friendship and togetherness. The children perform in groups and role-play what they see and observe from their immediate environment. Their observations and role-plays can only be understood if placed within the wider macro culture of the Luo people. What seems to be "mere children's games" thus become important creative works that reflect the Luo cultural values and aesthetics.

### 2.3 Other Issues in Luo and Luhya Children's Singing Games

Luo and Luhya children's singing games communicate many cultural issues that are part of the two communities. Being neighbouring communities, many of the values communicated are shared. Children's singing games from the two communities act as a prism to the reflection of the wider macro culture of the two communities.

Apart from communicating deeply-rooted cultural issues, children's singing games from the two communities reveal other issues that are significant to the socialization and development of the child.

The singing games aim at developing the child's intelligence and imagination. To achieve this objective, the two communities have singing games that test the child's wit concerning types of food and also flora and fauna in the environment. The Luhya children's singing game "Inyama" (meat) is similar to the Luo's "Ringo" (meat). The two games test the child's intelligence. Children perform in a circle kneeling down, and are led by a group leader. The leader mentions various types of meat:

Meat Meat  
A cow's?  
A goat's?  
A sheep's?  
A dog's?

The group responds to the edible meat. One who responds to the meat forbidden in their culture is penalized. The two singing games from both communities thus enhance the child's concentration and imagination at the same time testing his/her wit.

Many other Luhya and Luo Children's singing games warn against certain behaviours or actions viewed as vices within the cultural contexts of the two communities. The Luhya children's singing game, "Onyando Nakhebi" (Onyando the little thief), sounds a warning to wicked characters in the community:

Onyando yabukula  
(Onyando stole)

Ingokho yabene  
(Someone's chicken)

Nakhwesa eliyayi  
(And pulled out an egg)

Halala neimondo  
(And the gizzard)  
Natsibolela mukamba nolachile  
(He said to it, "tomorrow you will be a meal")

Onyando nakhang'ang'a  
(Onyando is wicked)

Siamba abasikari  
(I wish I had police)

Bafumila Onyando.  
(To arrest Onyando)

This singing game is a clear warning to children who may develop vices such as stealing. Onyando is used symbolically to represent weird characters in the society. The mention of the police at the end is a clear warning meant to arrest and deter such negative tendencies in children.

Good character and hygiene are virtues that are emphasized in both Luhya and Luo children's singing games. Among the two communities, children were expected to be clean so that they do not get attacked by diseases. Jigger infection was viewed in the two communities as being a result of an unhygienic environment and individuals who did not take their hygiene seriously. The Luhya children condemn this in their singing game "Ong'ando". Ong'ando is said to be infected by jiggers and scabies because of being unable to take his hygiene seriously. Children satirize him:

Soloist: Ong'ado mwene tsinyende tsiamumala  
(Ong'ado has a lot of jiggers)

Soloist: Lelo bulano yeyakilanga esisokoro  
(Nowadays he scratches himself with a  
maize cob.)

The singing game acts as a satire and a warning against untidy people. During the performance the performers may point out one who is infected by jiggers thus making him/her feel ashamed and thus learn the tricks of keeping safe from jiggers.

Luo children also sing and warn against weird characters and call upon their peers to follow the culturally accepted norms and behaviour. The song "Bet ang'ewa" (sitting exposed) warns girls on the right manner of conducting themselves when in public places such as "echiro" (at the market). It is important to note that the Luo people socialized their girls to grow up with respect and honour. Girls were traditionally expected to sit in a certain posture – with legs flat on the ground or together. This was a means of ensuring that girls respect themselves and others in the community. This contrasts with the

contemporary situation where young people walk almost “naked” and shamelessly simply because of aping western mannerisms that have little to do with African cultural values.

Apart from acting as warnings and developing children’s imagination, other Luhya and Luo singing games such as “Ya ya ya” are mainly for entertainment and help in socializing children. Others like “Marobo” test the child’s concentration in a group performance at the same time creating friendship among children.

Both Luo and Luhya children delve in fantasies and role-plays as they imitate nature and sing about their immediate environment. The game “I lost my letter” appears in both the communities and is used to enhance the game as the performers imagine a lost letter and vigorously dance, sing and search for it.

Singing games based on fantasy are common among the Luhya children. They sometimes imitate the sound of an ogre. This creates fear in the younger children but with the aim of entertaining and socializing them. In the game “Ngolindo” (the sound made by an ogre) children fantasize about an ogre that wants to take away one of them. They improvise a struggle to free themselves from the ogre as they change into a tug-of-war that ends up happily.

The aesthetic value communication of the children’s singing games from the two communities overtly comments on the aspirations and cultural expectations of these communities. Children from these communities take their time, away from adults to

create, improvise, and role-play in their singing games. These singing games become rich reservoirs of the aesthetics and values of the two communities.

Our analysis of these singing games specifically places the child's creative output within a wider macro culture and appreciates the fact that children are part and parcel of this wider culture. Thus their creative outputs are in many ways branches of the broader creative activities of the communities. Aspects of change in the traditions of the two communities will be explored more fully in chapter four of the thesis.

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**CHAPTER THREE**  
**STYLE AND AESTHETIC COMMUNICATION IN LUHYA**  
**AND LUO CHILDREN'S SINGING GAMES**

**3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, we examine and offer a stylistic analysis of the collected children's singing games, both the text and performance characteristics. Since style cannot be delinked from the meaning of the text, the chapter evaluates the stylistic features of the singing games and their relevance in terms of value communication.

As King (1986) has correctly observed, the main organizing element in game play consists of explicit rules which guide children's group behaviour. Singing games are organized in characteristic formations that involve two or more sides, competition and agreed-upon criteria for determining the winner or enhancing the enjoyment and the communication.

Luo and Luhya children's singing games are characterized by descriptive elements that reflect the aesthetics of these two communities. Some of these descriptive elements include rhythmical quality of syncopated rhymes which are coupled with hand clapping or foot thumbing. The singing games are performed in dance formations and movements that are rooted into the cultural aesthetics of the two communities.

This chapter specifically focuses on these descriptive elements and the dance formations as stylistic features that enhance the aesthetic value communication of the singing games. Some of the descriptive features of language that the chapter addresses include: syncopation, repetition, imagery, diction, rhyme, personification, nonsense words and rhyme, allusions, onomatopoeia among others.

The chapter also addresses the performance style in terms of dance movements and dance formations. Some of the dance movements and formations analysed include the ring formation, line formation, semi-circular formation, group and paired formations, parallel lines formations, circular formations among others.

### **3.2 Descriptive Features in Luo and Luhya Children's Singing Games and their Value Communication**

#### **(i) Syncopation**

According to Wharton-Boyd (1983:147) Syncopation is the use of stress where it is usually unexpected. Syncopation is one of the most characteristic of Luhya and Luo children's singing games. This stress is significant to the harmony of the singing games and is enhanced by hand clapping and foot thumbing.

In the Luo children's singing game "Matunda" (Fruits) children sing as they clap their hands and repeat the refrain, "Ee matunda" (Ee fruit). This clapping gives emphasis to the game thus contributing to its musicality and rhythm. The song is purely an



entertainment piece that is vigorously performed as the participants clap and sing. The soloist even encourages the performers to vigorously participate.

Soloist: Nyithindo Pam uru uduto  
(Children may you all clap)

In the other Luo children's singing game "ya ya ya ya" (ya ya ya ya), the soloist leads the performers in a kind of call and response performance. The soloist calls "ya ya ya ya" and the participants respond, "ya!" The "ya!" is stressed as the performers follow the leader's instructions.

Solo: Ya Ya Ya Ya  
(Ya Ya Ya Ya)

All: Ya!  
(Ya!)

Solo: Atieno donji diere  
(Atieno get at the centre)

All: Ya!  
(Ya!)

Solo: Mondo isungri matin  
(Boast a little)

All: Ya!  
(Ya!)

Solo: Mondo imiel dodo matin  
(So you dance "dodo" a bit)

All: Ya!  
(Ya!)

Solo: Kendo inindi piny ka rombo  
(Then you lie down like a sheep)

All: Ya!  
(Ya!)

The syncopation in this game enhances the harmony and rhythm of the game and contributes to the entertainment. The soloist asks Atieno to “boast” a little bit and dance “dodo”. “Dodo” is a Luo traditional dance that is performed by vigorously shaking of shoulders. The use of the word “boast” is in line with the Luo aesthetics. Traditionally the Luo were a people who respected dignity, they were a proud community, people of “Nyadhi” (class). This simple children’s singing game subtly communicates the Luo aesthetics of class, dignity and pride.

Syncopation is thus a major element of Luo children’s singing games. Apart from enhancing the harmony of the games, it also communicates the aesthetics of the Luo people. It cuts across many of the collected Luo children’s singing games. This descriptive element is even more elaborate in Luhya children’s singing games.

Luhya children use hand clapping, hand thumping on the ground and foot stomps to give stress to their performances. In the call and response performance “Saa Salinganga” Luhya children employ syncopation as the group responds to the soloist’s call.

Soloist:	Saa salinganga (Saa salinganga)
All:	Saa salinganga (Saa salinganga)
Soloist:	Awinja hamba omulina (Awinja choose a friend)
All:	Manase mambe owanje saa (And I will also choose mine)
Soloist:	Saa salinganga (Saa salinganga)

The nonsense phrase “Saa salinganga” is used for syncopation purpose thus enhancing the harmony and rhythm of the performance. This syncopation is vigorously danced to as the soloist asks one of the performers to select a friend from the group.

The above singing games thus communicate the value of friendship. In his study of African American Children’s Singing Games, Wharton-Boyd (1983:56) has this to say about children’s singing games:

...the use of singing games allows children to work at various levels of abilities, creating an atmosphere of working together to acquire communication skills, develops thinking patterns, provide collective experiences.

These observations are true to Luo and Luhya children’s singing games. As the children entertain themselves, they learn and communicate the aesthetic values and aspirations of their people.

Syncopation in the performance of Luhya children’s singing games seems to dominate many of the singing games. In the singing game “Amabele” (milk) the response of the group to the soloist’s call plays the role of stress that contributes to the rhythm of the performance. This stress is unexpected since in normal cases, the participants are expected to simply answer to the soloist’s call:

Soloist:	Amabele (Milk)
All:	Kalimung’ombe (It is in the cow)
Soloist:	Amabele (Milk)

All:                    Kalimung'ombe ya papa, kali mung'ombe  
                              (It is in father's cow, it is the cow)

In this performance the stress is on the response – “the milk is in the cow”. And as the performers dance in a group, the performance reveals other issues and values relating to the Luhya community. The group responds to the soloist call “Amabele” by revealing that the milk is in their father's cow, their uncle's cow and their grandfather's cow.

Among the Luhya people, ownership of property was clearly defined. This children's singing game reveals that children identify with the Luhya kinship system and also communicate the community's values on property ownership. It is interesting to note that important property that defined the family's economic and social status was mainly identified with men. Thus in this singing game the “cow” (symbol of economic and social class) is identified with the “Father”, “Uncle”, and “Grandfather”.

This ownership of property is significant though in some variations of the same singing game, children sing of the milk being in Mother's cow (eg. “Mabele gali mung'ombe” – (milk is in the cow) as sung among the Maragoli sub-community of the Luhya). The variation may be attributed to the fact that in other Luhya sub-communities women were the one who milked cows. Again this can be attributed to the changing trends in property ownership whereby women are now increasingly becoming owners of property.

Syncopation is also prominent in other Luhya children's singing games including, “Ndalia Obubwe” (I ate his bread) and “Obule Bwanje” (My millet)

In both singing games, the performance is done in a call and response pattern. The soloist leads the performance in the call as the group answers to the call. Their response to the call is stressed to emphasize the answer and also add to the musicality and rhythm of the performance.

In “Ndalia Obubwe” (I ate his bread) the group’s response “Obwobule” (millet bread) is regularly repeated throughout till the end when the response changes to the ending form of ululations – “chacha cha”

In “Obule Bwanje” – (My millet), which is related to the above performance, children respond to the soloist’s call by stressing the words uttered by the soloist and emphasizing their re-enactment and dramatization in performance.

It is important, therefore, to note that syncopation as a descriptive feature cuts across Luo and Luhya children’s singing games and is used for the same purposes of enhancing the performance, creating rhythm, contributing to the harmony of the performance, emphasizing cultural values and aesthetics and contributing to the entertainment of the entire performance.

## **(ii) Repetition**

Repetition refers to a stylistic feature whereby the performers of children’s singing games say certain words or phrases more than once. The repeated words and phrases add to the aesthetic communication and realization of the performance. They emphasize certain

values, add to the rhythm of the singing games, fun to the performance and distinguish certain aspects in the performance.

The repetition in Luo and Luhya children's singing games resembles the poetic and musical structure of call-response. This call-response is crucial to the spirit of the performance because it synthesizes the solo performer and the other participants in a unified movement. Call-response also tests the performers' attention making them concentrate on the performance. It is also part of the rules that children have to observe and thus in a way enhances their attention, imagination and tests their wit.

In the singing game "Meat, Meat" performed by both the Luo and Luhya children, the repetition of the word "Meat, Meat" adds to the rhythm of the performance at the same time calling for keen concentration among the participants. Those who are not attentive end up being eliminated as they respond to a "wrong" meat or one forbidden in the communities.

The soloist calls – "Meat Meat" and the participants' response is "Meat". The call-response performance continues as the soloist continues mentioning the meat of different animals. The participants are expected to respond by answering and stressing the word "Meat".

Soloist: Meat, meat, meat?

All: Meat!

Soloist: Meat of a cow?

All: Meat!

Soloist: Meat of a goat?

All: Meat!

This call and response may go on for long. The main objective is to test the participants' knowledge of the forbidden types of meat and those allowed for consumption by the communities.

Without any prompting, the soloist may change and say "meat of a donkey" and whoever responds to this by saying "meat" is then eliminated from the performance. This is because among the Luo and Luhya, donkey meat is forbidden for consumption. Indeed many communities in Kenya traditionally forbid donkey meat.

In other Luo and Luhya children's singing games, repetition is used to emphasize certain values or condemn vices. What is condemned or emphasized is normally in line with the aesthetics, aspirations and values of the communities.

In the Luo children's singing game "Ng'ielo" (Python) the participants respond to the soloist's call "Ng'ielo, Ng'ielo" (Python, Python) by answering "Ng'ielo Jagodhre" (Python the meanderer) This response is repeated throughout the performance as the soloist mentions the python's ways :

Solo: Kata kuma oaye  
(Where he comes from)

All: Ng'ielo jagodhre  
(Python the meanderer)

Solo: Kata kuma odhiye  
(Where he goes)

All: Ng'ielo jagodhre  
(Python the meanderer)

Solo: Ka omako ng'ato  
(If he catches a person)

All: Ng'ielo jagodhre  
(Python the meanderer)

Solo: Ne opowore e od maro  
(He bursts into the mother-in-law's house)

In the above singing game the emphasis is on the ways of the python. Here the slithering or meandering movement of the python is emphasized. This in a way is symbolic of wicked characters in society. This is suggested not only by the slithering movement as re-enacted by the children but also by the fact that the “Python” is capable of bursting into a mother-in-law's house.

This “bursting” symbolism suggests wickedness and thus goes on to strengthen our conclusion that this children's singing game that imitates the environment has a double suggestion and that it can only be understood when critically placed within the Luo aesthetics and values.

The python is said to slither wherever it goes or comes. Among the Luo people, weird characters in society were creatively condemned through suggestive imagery and allusions in Luo verbal arts. As Finnegan (1970) has observed, African oral literature is



highly symbolic, that instead of calling a greedy person greedy, such images as “hyena” are commonly used.

This indirect reference that is symbolic was meant to alleviate direct confrontation and also serve double purposes by not being directed to one person but applicable to many who may have the same vice.

Among the Luhya and Luo people, mother-in-laws were highly respected and a son-in-law could not just “burst” into their houses (visiting them unexpectedly and in a weird manner). Thus the symbolism of “python” is deeply rooted in the cultural aesthetics of the Luo people and the imagery of its movement goes beyond the superficial meaning of the text.

This symbolic condemnation of vices is further communicated in the Luo children’s singing game “Oyundi” (The sparrow). The symbolic communication is done through a well patterned repetition of the participants’ response to the soloist’s call:

Soloist: Oyundi ni dhi ing’weti  
(Sparrow go and gather vegetables)

Response: Oyundo ni tienda lit  
(Sparrow says, “my leg is unwell”)

The response of the “sparrow” to all calls to participate in work is that his leg is unwell. But when he is called to join other members at the table, he literally runs there.

The repetition of the response thus emphasizes and condemns the sparrow's anti-social and lazy character. It is ironic that when asked to "come and eat" he doesn't complain of his "sick" leg.

This children's singing game has used the descriptive feature of repetition to condemn laziness, opportunism and anti-social characteristics in human beings. The sparrow thus symbolizes these wicked and lazy characters.

Repetition as a descriptive feature in Luo and Luhya Children's singing games is related to syncopation and contributes to the musicality and rhythm of the performances. However, repetition is also used to emphasize various values.

In the Luhya children's singing game, "Mbe Ovule" (Give me finger millet), the participants respond to the soloist's call and words by emphasizing "Ovule" (finger millet). It should be noted here that finger millet was a staple grain used for making finger millet bread and also porridge. It was therefore a backbone of the staple foods of both the Luo and Luhya before the introduction of maize. Thus in this singing game the emphasis is on the traditional staple food. This performance is done as the participants dance shaking their shoulders. The shaking is also symbolic of the swaying of the finger millet plant during windy time. In a way, therefore, the singing game alludes to the environmental imitation of the finger millet as observed by children.

In the other Luhya children's singing game, "Mbe ovule" (give me finger millet), which is a variation of the above game, the repetition of the refrain "Finger millet" is emphasized as the performers vigorously dance to the game play:

Solo: Mbe ovule vwange  
(Give me my finger millet)

All: Ovule!  
(Finger millet)

Solo: Mbe ovule vwange  
(Give me my finger millet!)

All: Ovule!  
(Finger millet!)

Solo: Muhonja mulahi  
(Dear Muhonja)

All: Ovule!  
(Finger millet!)

Solo: Singila usuve  
(Stand up and dance)

All: Ovule!  
(Finger millet!)

Solo: Sieva kulole  
(Dance for us)

All: Ovule!  
(Finger millet!)

Solo: Vina amavega  
(Shake your shoulders)

All: Ovule!  
(Finger millet!)

Solo: Yilana yikala  
(Go back and sit)

All: Ovule!  
(Finger millet!)

Solo: Vosi singili  
(Let us all stand up)

The repetition of the refrain “Finger Millet” is emphasized and contributes to the harmony of the singing game as the performers follow the instructions of the soloist.

Repetition is a poetic feature that makes Luo and Luhya children’s singing games rich and enjoyable at the same time communicating the aesthetic and cultural values of the two communities. Indeed many scholars who have studied children’s oral poetry attribute the enjoyment of the poetry to this stylistic feature (Alembi, 2000; Alembi, 1991). Children’s singing games are part and parcel of children’s oral poetry and children’s creative output.

Luo and Luhya children’s singing games are rich in descriptive features, particularly that of repetition. The repetition is part of the aesthetic features of these children’s creative output. Some of the commonly repeated words are nonsense words (words that are semantically meaningless).

As Alembi (2000:96-97) correctly observes, the nonsense words are introduced to add to the rhythm of the performance and also “neutralize the aspect of the feelings” aroused by the performance.

The singing games that fully rely on nonsense words are pure limericks. Some of these limericks include the Luo “Ya ya ya”, “Marobo” and also the Luhya “Marobo” and “Oliliyo”.

### **(iii) Imagery/symbolism**

Imagery refers to a descriptive use of language and specifically denotes anything that appeals to the senses of the reader. According to Alembi (2000: 90) an image is anything that creates a picture in the mind of a reader. Oyoo (2006) differentiates an image from a symbol. He states that unlike symbols which are abstract, images are concrete. And that an image can be elevated to a symbol if it is constantly used and associated with abstract ideas unrelated to it.

In this subsection we examine selected significant images used in Luo and Luhya children’s singing games and how they relate to the value communication of the selected texts. Since imagery sometimes changes to symbolism, this section treats the two together as figurative use of language in children’s creative output.

In literature, we can identify two types of symbols: public and private symbols. Public symbols are those that exist within a people’s tradition. These symbols are well known and recognized when used. Private symbols are those that are created by artists for literary aesthetic functions.

Images and symbols that flower creative works are taken from the immediate environment of the artist. In written literature authors borrow images and symbols from the immediate environment. Thus the images used by Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* cannot be divorced from Achebe's Igbo community and its aesthetics. Written literature mixes private and public symbols for aesthetic communication.

Oral literature also borrows images and symbols from the immediate environment. Consequently a narrative that comes from a mountaneous region may not have images and symbols from the sea or the lake. The symbols and images are not just used for the sake of it but have much to say about the environment of the artist or performer. Most of the symbols are public ones whose meaning is easily recognized in the traditions of the people concerned.

The images and symbols that appear in Luo and Luhya children's singing games can be roughly categorized as: animal images/symbols, plant images/symbols, food images/symbols and human images or symbols.

The animal images/symbols that appear in Luo children's singing games are those that are taken directly from the Luo environment, particularly their lakeside habitat. In the singing game: "Mumi Gocho" (The catfish plays) images from the lake are prominent. In this simple singing game, children refer to three different types of fishes: catfish,

mudfish and dagger (“omena”). These are water images that reflect the child’s surrounding and are also delicacies in the region.

Luo children also sing about the animals that inhabit the lake such as the hippo and the crocodile. These images reflect the environment of the child and also communicate the values of the Luo people relating to these environmental images. The fear and horror that the size of the hippo elicits in children is re-enacted in their singing game as they wonder:

Wololo wololo wololo  
That is a very big animal  
That animal stamps the ground.

As Luo children sing and dramatize in their own free time, they refer to other animal images that are taken directly from their environment. Some of these images include those of domesticated animals such as the cat, “paka gi oyieyo” (Cat and Rat), “Nyarombo” (The lamb), “Atung Rombo”, (The horned sheep) among others. They also refer to images of birds such as the crane bird, the sparrow and others.

Though animal images don’t prominently feature in Luhya children’s singing games, a few games use these images, mainly images of domesticated animals and also wild animals. In the game, “Isimba” (Lion), Luhya children sing about the lion and how it killed their family members. This fear of the leading wild cat that is found in many Kenyan National Parks is real among children. Luhya children sing:

Isimba ni indulu ee  
(The lion is fierce ee)

In this children's singing game the soloist role-plays a mother. She leads the group of children who respond to the words and call by answering "ee". This goes on until the end when the soloist commands the performers to run away from the lion's wrath. This marks the end of the singing game as the performers respond "eee" and run away.

This role-play and running away are part of the child's world of fantasy. Fantasy plays a significant role in the child's social and moral development. It is also necessary as a form of escape from the provincialism of time and space. This escape is crucial to the child's mental growth. It also reveals to the child possibilities of many alternatives in life.

In the singing game "Ing'ombe" (the cow), the image of the cow is referred to. This image is prominent in Luhya children's singing games as it appears in games that talk about milk.

Animal images in both Luhya and Luo children's singing games reflect the child's environment, their fears and their fantasies. These images are also part of the child's imitation of his/her immediate environment. Thus the image of the "python" in the Luo children's singing game "Ng'ielo" (python) reflects Luo children's knowledge of their environment at the same time communicating the deeper meaning of wickedness in society. This wickedness is symbolized by the slithering movement of the python.



Apart from animal images and symbols, Luo and Luhya children's singing games have images of traditional foods that are loved in their communities. The images of these traditional foods reflect the child's understanding of his or her immediate environment and also communicate the communities' aesthetics and values on traditional delicacies and cuisines.

Luo and Luhya children's singing games are significant in revealing cultural images and different foods consumed in the two communities.

The Luo children's singing game "Chiemo mit ka bii ne" (Food is sweet here come and see), refers to the images of "ugali" (a local bread) which is a staple food for both the Luo and the Luhya.

In the singing game "Adila mit" Luo children refer to the traditionally fermented milk and other images of food such as Nile Perch and dagger (omena).

Reference to images of food is evidence to the child's awareness of his/her cultural cuisines and delicacies. It is also a proof that as children grow up they learn and internalize the cultural aesthetics of their communities through these singing games.

Luhya children's singing games are dominated by images of local foods and cuisines. The Luhya children's singing games "Amabele" (Milk) and "Ndalia obubwe" (I ate his bread) refer to milk and the local millet bread respectively.

#### **(iv) Diction and Nonsense words**

Diction refers to the choice of words in creative works. In this section we look at how Luo and Luhya children deliberately select the words they use in their singing games. We have treated diction together with nonsense words since the two serve the same purpose of communicating the Luhya and Luo cultural aesthetics, entertaining children and foremost socializing the children into their cultural expectations and norms.

The words used in the Luhya and Luo communities are selected from the repertoire of the languages of the two communities. As Alembe (2000:93) correctly observes:

The choice of words in any creative work of art is a crucial factor because this is an aspect of style that can make a child like or dislike singing or listening to poems sung. Badly chosen words can put many children off singing and listening to poems.

It is important to note that even the nonsense words used in Luhya and Luo children's singing games are selected deliberately to create rhythm and give the singing games harmony.

In the Luhya children's singing game "Onyando nakhebi" (Onyando the little thief) words have been deliberately selected to have greater effect and thus effective communication. In this singing game that condemns the vice of stealing, the persona, Onyando, is referred to as a "little thief". This suggests that Onyando is a young adult involved in the vice of stealing. In the singing game the Luhya children create a conversation in the dramatization of Onyando's vice:

Onyando yabukula  
(Onyando stole)

Ingokho yabene  
(Someone's chicken)

Nakhwesa eliyayi  
(And pulled out an egg)

Halala neimondo  
(And the gizzard)

Natsibolela mukamba nolachile  
(He said to it, "tomorrow you will be a meal")

Onyando nakhang'ang'a  
(Onyando is wicked)

Siamba abasikari  
(I wish I had police)

Bafumila Onyando.  
(To arrest Onyando.)

The images of the egg and the gizzard that Onyando "pulled" out of the hen suggest that he killed it in order to have a meal. These actions make the performers refer to him as "akhang'ang'a" (wicked). The choice of the word "akhang'ang'a" is significant since it emphasizes how "wicked" (though wicked does not give the weight given by the local word) Onyando is.

As the children sing and dance as they dramatize Onyando's wickedness, the singing game's structure clearly comes out. The first two lines are selected as expository lines that introduce Onyando, the little thief. The third and the fourth lines present a rising action as they show Onyando's wickedness.

The fifth line employs conversational tone as Onyando talks to the hen. From this line the singing game moves to condemn Onyando and even wish for his arrest. This becomes the denouement of the action of the performance.

In this simple singing game, Luhya children learn and are socialized to condemn vices and be responsible members of their community. The mention of police reveals the children's awareness of the structures that enforce law and order in their society.

“Mama mbe tsimbindi” (Mother give me cowpeas) is another Luhya children's singing game that has a special choice of diction. In the first three stanzas the line “Silauma esirietso, khane inzala yakhwira” (if there was no “esirietso” [*erythrococca bongensis*] we would have died of hunger) is repeated. This repetition adds to the rhythm of the singing game at the same time emphasizing the importance of the wild vegetable.

In the same children's singing game, the importance of “esirietso” is put above the rest of the plants mentioned, maize and beans. The choice of the words “Nonyole akhanyama osetsanga nokinga” (when you have meat, you grind with pride) emphasizes the significance of meat as a delicacy. The performers say that one grinds with pride when there is meat. Grinding was a traditional way of making flour both among the Luhya and Luo of Kenya. Grain was ground on a flat stone to produce flour used in making “ugali”, the local bread.

In the Luhya children's singing game, "Ong'ado", the persona is ridiculed for being infested by jiggers. Among the Luhya and Luo people of Kenya it is believed that jiggers only infest those who are unhygienic or "dirty". In this singing game the children say:

Solo: Ong'ado mwene tsinyende tsiamumala  
(Ong'ado has a lot of jiggers)

All: Onga'do mwene tsinyende tsiamumala  
(Ong'ado has a lot of jiggers)

Solo: Lelo bulano yeyakilanga esisokoro  
(Nowadays he uses a maize cob to scratch himself)

The choice of the imagery of a maize cob emphasizes how untidy Ong'ado is. In normal cases Luhya people don't use "esisokoro" (maize cob) which is quite rough and can cause injury to the body.

In the other Luhya children singing game, "Omwana oyoo" (That child) Luhya children dramatize how a child from their community has turned wicked. The word chosen to emphasize how one of their own has turned weird is "Linani" (wild dog or ogre). There are many Luhya words that describe wicked persons, for example "omubi" (bad character), "omutamanu" (weird character), "wamaundu" (weird character) and others. Therefore the choice of the word "Linani" here serves a special aesthetic function by emphasizing the uniqueness of the persona in the singing game.

Many Luhya and Luo children's singing games employ nonsense words to create rhythm and also add to the musicality of the singing games. Children enjoy the sound of words

produced by these nonsense words. In most cases they dance to the limericks and their dance formations are sometimes determined by the sound of words.

Referring to the sound of words in children's singing games, Alembi (2000:99) says:

This is a very important stylistic device in the oral children's poetry. It is generally known that children are sensitive to sound ...they learn a lot and derive pleasure from listening to such sounds.

The words that create sound effect are selected purposefully to add pleasure to the singing games and also give them a sense of harmony.

In "Saa salinganga" Luhya children sing about friendship. "Saa salinganga" is a nonsense phrase that cannot be translated into English. Children sing and emphasize this limerick as they stand up, dance and select friends from a group seated in a circle.

Nonsense words also appear in the singing game "Koloti" (zigzag). The word "Koloti" is repeated as children perform in a zigzag formation as they take different routes.

Nonsense words are common in both Luhya and Luo children's singing games and are related to syncopation, repetition and emphasis.

The choice of these nonsense words is also associated with the child's imitation of sounds from the immediate environment. The Luhya children's singing game, "katimbe", relies on the repetition of the nonsense word "katimbe" to give the singing game unity and therefore create pleasure.

Luhya children sing about the growing of various plants as they enjoy the refrain, “kati-katimbe”.

Among the Luo people, choice of sound words goes further to reveal the child’s fears, anxiety and even understanding of their environment. Many nonsense words in Luo children’s singing games serve the same purpose as those in Luhya children’s singing games.

In the singing game “Ya ya ya ya”, Luo children rely on nonsense sounds to add pleasure to their singing games. The soloist leads the group of participants as she calls upon the participants to stand up and enter the centre of the circle formation. As she calls and directs the participants on what to do, the other participants answer in a chorus, “Ya!” The “ya” in the singing game is deliberately selected to add rhythm and therefore entertain children.

The Luo children’s singing games employ special sound words that imitate sounds made by animals and birds within their locality. In the game “Nyarombo” (The lamb) the sound made by a lamb is imitated:

Leader: Nyarombo mee  
(The Lamb mee)

Players: Mee  
(Mee)

Leader: Miya nyithinda  
(Give me my children)

Players: Mee  
(Mee)

In this performance the leader mentions many things particularly animals that children know and the players answer in unison, “mee”. “Mee” is the bleating of the lamb.

Other sound words selected by Luo children in their singing games are those that are rooted in their cultural aesthetics and are mainly used to show fear, anxiety or surprise. In the singing game, “Rao rao rabet” (Hippo, hippo, the big one), the sound words “wololo, wololo, wololo” are taken from the Luo people’s cultural aesthetics. This sound is normally made to show surprise and can be heard in funerals or accidents as the mourners or viewers express their surprise.

In the above singing game, Luo children express their surprise at the size of the hippo by borrowing a well-known Luo surprise exclamation.

Other Luo children’s singing games employ onomatopoeic words that describe and imitate the actions or movements of certain things. These actions (onomatopoeic) words are deliberately selected to add meaning to the message of the singing game.

In the singing game “Oyundi” (sparrow), a game that condemns laziness and anti-social character, the movement of the sparrow and the flapping of its wings are imitated. When the sparrow is asked to join others on the table it hurriedly accepts and moves on:



First: Oyundi ni bi chiem  
(Sparrow come and eat)

Second: Oyundi ni “sesese”  
(Sparrow “sesese”)

The onomatopoeic word “sesese” describes the sound produced by the wings of the sparrow as it flies.

The choice of this action word also communicates a deeper meaning to do with how shamelessly anti-social characters become opportunistic. It is common among the Luo people to find elders cautioning the youth to avoid the “sesese” habits. These are careless deeds that may lead one into trouble or embarrass him/her.

It is thus important to note that the choice of diction in Luo children’s singing games is very much part of the Luo aesthetics of communication particularly their verbal arts. In the singing game, “Ng’ielo” (Python), Luo children imitate the movement of a python which symbolizes weirdness or wickedness which they discourage.

In this singing game the last line is onomatopoeic as the word “sesegere” describes the movement of the python. Combined with the repeated refrain “Ngielo Jagodhre” (Python the meanderer) the two add to the meaning of the performance.

Among the Luo people a person who is dishonest or wicked may be described as a “meanderer”. The youths are normally cautioned against this vice. This vice deviates from the Luo aesthetics of being dignified and decisive in a positive way.

The Luo people use words selectively in relation to the occasion, context and the circumstances that surround the conversation. The exclamation “Yawa!” is commonly used to show surprise. In the singing game “Eyawa ka wadonjo” (Oh, when we arrive), Luo children use the phrase in their group performance to stress the importance of their play as opposed to that of their competitors. They emphasize:

Ka wadonjo to wan gi tugo adier  
(When we arrive we have a game)  
Tukwa loyo suku aah miendwa loyo  
(Our game is better than yours aah, our dance is better.)

This singing game is performed by two competing groups and the phrase “Eyawa” may also be separated where “E” becomes an exclamation while “yawa” refers to “people”. Here children acknowledge the presence of their competing group and go on to claim that their game is the best.

Luo and Luhya children’s singing games are rich in descriptive features that make them creative works. These stylistic features are observed in the texts of the singing games and others highlighted in the actual performance of the singing games. These features contribute to the unity of the singing games, create musicality in the games and communicate subtle cultural issues to do with cultural aesthetics, aspirations and norms.

These stylistic features in the singing games are poetic devices that are mostly borrowed from the Luo and Luhya verbal arts. These elements of verbal arts are enjoyed by children and have contributed to the popularity of children’s singing games among the Luo and the Luhya children.

Apart from these descriptive features as actualized through the texts, Luo and Luhya children's singing games have performance styles realized through dance movements and dance formations. In the following section we address this aspect of the Luo and Luhya children's singing games.

### **3.3 Performance Style and its Aesthetic Communication in Luo and Luhya Children's Singing Games**

In this section we address the elements of performance style as observed in the researcher's participation and keen observation of the Luo and Luhya children in their singing games. This section recognizes the fact that children's singing games can only be understood when placed within their cultural contexts. Thus both the texts and the actions of the singing games are part and parcel of the communities' aesthetics.

As Fernie (1988) notes, children's singing games have explicit rules that are used as a way of guiding the performers. Though many children's games are spontaneously done, Luo and Luhya children's singing games use rules that guide the performers in their movements and dance formations. Fenie (1988:3) has this to say of children's play games:

The main organizing element in game play consists of explicit rules which guide children's group behaviour. Game play is very organized.... Game usually involve two or more sides, competition, and agreed upon criteria for determining a winner. Children use games flexibly to meet social and intellectual needs. For example, choosing sides may affirm friendship or a pecking order.

Fernie's observations are true to Luo and Luhya children's singing games. As this section reveals, the rules are explicit and the sides are sometimes involved in a competition with losers being eliminated from the performance.

In her study of African American Children's singing games, Wharton-Boyd (1983:47) says that in addition to music style, African American children's singing games are also "characterized by their dance movements. Included in many of the singing games are jumps, leaps turns, half-turns split ..." Wharton-Boyd further observes:

Black singing games are distinguished by their many formations. These variations include the circular formation, often termed as "ring plays", couple formations and line formations.

It is important to note that these observations are also true to Luo and Luhya children's singing games. In this section we examine these performance styles in terms of dance formations, the movements and the rules that Luo and Luhya children use in their performance of the singing games.

Some of the formations and movements examined in this section include the circular formation, semi-circular formation, line formation, group performance, parallel lines formations, single line formations among others.

Circular formations, sometimes called ring formations are the most common among the Luo and Luhya children's singing games. These formations enhance the unity of friendship among the performers.

In the Luhya children's singing game "Ndalia Obubwe" (I ate his bread), Luhya children perform in a circular formation while seated down with the soloist at the centre of the ring. As they sing about the sorghum bread, they entertain themselves and also learn how to socialize.

In the above singing game the soloist calls upon different performers to stand up and dance. The one pointed at stands up and dances until he or she is told to go and sit down.

Solo: Otenyo sinjira  
(Stand up Otenyo)

All: Obwobule  
(His sorghum bread)

Solo: Orengie amabeka  
(Shake your shoulders)

All: Obwobule  
(His sorghum bread)

Solo: Kalukha wikhale  
(Go back to your place and sit down)

This singing game can go on for a long time depending on the number of participants since everyone is expected to do a jig by shaking their shoulders.

The shaking of shoulders reflects Luhya cultural aesthetics because this is a traditionally accepted style of dancing. This style is related to another Luhya dancing style called "Lipala" in which the dancers combine the shaking of shoulders and stamping of feet.

The Luhya circular formation of children's singing games has major sub-divisions. These include circular while standing, circular while squatting, circular while kneeling down, circular while seated down, and circular while walking.

In the singing game "Saa salinganga" (Saa salinganga), Luhya children perform the nonsense words "saa salinganga" as they move around in a circle. The leader calls out names of different participants and asks them to select a friend from the circle/or ring. This singing game though simple and mainly a limerick, prepares children psychologically for friendship and for their future roles as adults in the community.

Luhya children's singing games reveal the significance of friendship, unity and love of one another. In the singing game "Olukaka lwoma" (The fence is strong), children sing and dance in circular formation with one of them at the centre of the circle. In this game both boys and girls perform. They form a circle and one of them gets inside the circle. Those forming the circle hold hands together and the one inside tries to break out of the circle by looking for a weak point so as to break out.

The performance emphasizes, from the child's point of view, the importance of the traditional tree "omusangula". As Alembe (2002) has noted, in this children's singing game, through imitation and keen observation of the environment, Luhya children seem to refer to a deviation from the traditional practice of fencing. Among the Luhya, fencing was done using euphorbia.

However, it is important to note children's love of fruits since "Omusangula" produces sweet berries at the same time hard wood.

The strength of the children's circle also points to unity in the community. The one inside the circle finds it hard to break out but when he succeeds the game ends. Among the Luhya, unity and communality were viewed as great virtues for the survival of the community.

"Mbe ovule" (Give me finger millet) is a Luhya children's singing game which is a variation of the game "Ndalia obubwe" (I ate his sorghum bread). In this variation, Luhya children sing while seated. The soloist sits at the centre of the circular formation. His/Her role is to guide the participants in the performance. The theme of friendship is emphasized as children socialize, learn and entertain themselves.

In this singing game, children again emphasize the Luhya cultural aesthetics of dance as they shake their shoulders and dance the traditional jig.

This is similar to the singing game "Obule Bwanje" (My millet) in which Luhya children perform in a circle while kneeling down. This singing game is significant since in it Luhya children refer to two types of traditional dances amongst the Luhya people:

Solo: Joani sinjira  
(Joan stand up)

All: Sinjira  
(Stand up)

Solo: Okhinie mabeka  
(Shake your shoulders)

All: Mabeka  
(Shoulders)

Solo: Okhinie lipala  
(Dance lipala)

All: Lipala  
(Lipala)

Solo: Okhinie kudundu  
(Dance kudundu)

All: Kudundu  
(Kudundu)

The singing game refers to two Luhya styles of dancing, Lipala and Kidundu. These are well known traditional dance styles among the Luhya people. In “Lipala” the dancers concentrate on the shaking of shoulders and the head while strongly stamping their feet. In “Kudundu” the emphasis is on the gyration of the waist.

The reference to the above dance styles clearly reveals children’s singing games as reflections of the aesthetics and cultural patterns of their communities. This is true of both the Luo and Luhya children’s singing games.

Indeed the two communities have a variety of children’s singing games that emphasizes friendship, unity, communality and test children’s concentration and imagination.



The two communities share many of the dance formations and even the texts of their children's singing games. The circular formation seems prominent.

The children's singing game, "Ya ya ya ya" is shared between the two communities. Both Luhya and Luo children perform to the tune of this sound in a game that is done in a ring formation. The soloist leads the participants in vigorously dancing and shaking their bodies at the same time being attentive not to miss the instructions.

The Luhya children allude to the traditional dance styles among their community as the soloist asks one of the performers to get into the ring and dance:

Solo: Andongo ingira  
(Get in Andongo)

Chorus: Ya!  
(Ya!)

Solo: Wesungesunge  
(Feel Proud)

Chorus: Ya!  
(Ya!)

Solo: Welinyelinye  
(Pinch yourself)

Chorus: Ya!  
(Ya!)

Solo: Khina sukusa  
(Dance sukusa)

Chorus: Ya!  
(Ya)

Solo: Khina so  
(Dance So)

Chorus:       Ya!  
                  (Ya!)

This singing game, though shared among the Luo and Luhya children, conforms to the arguments of many ethnopoetic scholars that oral texts cannot be clearly understood outside the cultural aesthetics and super-structures that have engendered their production.

As the Luhya children perform, they refer to two Luhya traditional dance styles, *Sukusa* and *So*. These are traditional dances well known among the Luhya people.

As the Luo children perform the same singing game, we note minor differences in the dramatization and the texts of the singing game:

Solo: Atieno donji diere  
      (Atieno get into the centre)

Solo: Ya!  
      (Ya!)

Solo: Mondo isungri matin  
      (Boast a little bit)

All: Ya!  
      (Ya!)

Solo: Mondo imiel dodo matin  
      (So you dance “dodo” a bit)

All: Ya!  
      (Ya!)

Solo: Kendo inindi piny ka rombo  
      (Then you lie down like a sheep)

All: Ya!  
(Ya!)

In this version, the Luo children refer to Luo traditional dance style, 'dodo'. This is a dance style performed to the tune of Luo traditional music instruments. The image of the sheep and the simile of lying down like a sheep add to the aesthetic literary function and the communication effect of the game. Atieno is asked to "boast", be proud just like a "sheep" which lies down "proudly" (according to the Luo children's fantasy and imagination).

The children's singing game "Marobo" appears among the Luo and Luhya children's singing games and is also performed in a circular formation with children seated down. The leader of the game passes around a stone and the one who delays passing it over to the next participant is slightly "knocked" on the head and eliminated from the game.

This is a concentration test done through dramatization. The performers are expected to be alert lest they face the embarrassment of being eliminated. The words "Marobo" and "Tandarobo" are nonsense words used to add musicality to the singing game. It is interesting to note that this Luo and Luhya children's singing game also appears across many other communities in Kenya, indeed in all the eight provinces.

Luo children introduce a variation in the limerick by talking about children coming together to play with stones. This is the same as the Luhya version which directly

mentions the stones and warns participants against inactivity that may lead to disqualification:

Solo: Marobo  
(Marobo)

All: Tanda robo  
(Tanda robo)

Solo: Marobo  
(Marobo)

All: Tand robo  
(Tanda robo)

Solo: Makina ketsa  
(The stones are coming)

All: Nokhinda, nosasakwa  
(If you delay, you get beaten)

In many of the performances and dramatizations, children pass the stones quickly and whoever is found with more than one stone is eliminated from the game by a “slight punishment”, being knocked. Performers must be active and attentive. The stones must be passed swiftly to the next participant.

Both Luhya and Luo children perform this singing game repeatedly and, indeed, it is one of the most entertaining singing games among young children.

Apart from entertaining children, such a game creates unity among them. The singing, the rhythmical and lyrical activities are rooted in the cultures of the two communities.

Ring singing games are the most popular among both the Luo and Luhya children. In this type of dance movement and formation, children identify with their friends and appreciate one another. As they share in the rich knowledge of their cultural aesthetics, they come to identify with their cultures. The circular formation also enables children to socialize and develop critical imagination.

In many of the singing games the group leader is the one who guides the participants. As observed from the field, such a leader is normally the older child who is at the top of the performing age-group. This can be explained in what Tucker (1981) has observed as children's identification needs and their need to emulate the older ones as their models. Psychologically the older children would not like to be led by their young siblings and friends.

Among the Luo and Luhya children, the parallel lines formation and dance movements form part of the aesthetic performance of their singing games. In most cases the lines form a kind of competition with clear rules to be observed. In cases of competition, the losers accept the position without raising any trouble. This can be attributed to Piaget's (1932) observation on the child's moral view of life. Children believe that good must always win as a matter of necessity.

Thus in their children's singing games, Luo and Luhya children do not dispute the results of the game. To them a strict observation of the laid down rules satisfies their sense of justice.

It is important to note that the games that are performed in two lines formation and dance movements mostly involve girls and boys – with both genders playing and dramatizing in accordance with what they have assimilated and internalized from their cultural patterns and aesthetics.

The Luo and Luhya children's singing game "We want a friend" is performed in two parallel lines. The Luhya's version "Kwenya Omulina" (We want a friend), is performed by both girls and boys.

In this children's dramatization, the children move in two lines. They form two parallel lines and sing as they perform:

Group A: Khwenyanga omulina  
(We want a friend)  
Omulina mwene uyo  
(That friend)

Group B: Omulina wenywe niwina  
(Who is your friend? )  
Omulina mwene uyo  
(That friend)

Group A: Omulina wefwe ni Awinja  
(Our friend is Awinja)  
Omulina mwene uyo  
(That friend)

Group B: Niwina witsa okhumuenda?  
(Who will come for her?)  
Omulina mwene uyo  
(That friend)

Group A: Raeli yetsa okhumuenda  
(Rachel will come for her)  
Omulina mwene uyo  
(That friend)

All:           Sikala omwana wefwe  
                  (Good-bye our sister)  
                  Sikala olie obusuma nomurele  
                  (Stay back and eat maize bread with “omurele”.)

The dramatization of the children’s singing game is quite elaborate. One group announces the name of their would- be friend from the opposite line. However the fellow players on the line are hesitant in allowing their colleague to join the other group. This leads to a tug of war between the two groups. But before the tug of war begins, rules have to be observed. A rope is placed on the ground to demarcate the boundary for the contest.

The group that announced the name of their would- be friend sends an ambassador who joins hands with the named friend. Immediately the members of the opposing groups join their hands and a tug of war ensues. Whoever is pulled across the rope automatically loses and must join the winning group to let the game continue.

This singing game is performed by Luo children with little variation:

Group A:       Wan wadwaro osiepwa  
                  (We want our friend)  
                  Wan wadwaro owiepwa  
                  (We want our friend)  
                  Ma wanyalo ywayo  
                  (Whom we can pull)

Group B:       Osiepu en ng’awa?  
                  (Who is your friend?)  
                  Osiepu en ng’awa?  
                  (Who is your friend?)  
                  Ma mondo obi olimu  
                  (Who should come and visit you?)

Group A:      Osiepwa en Achieng'  
                    (Our friend is Achieng')  
                    Asiepwa en Achieng'  
                    (Our friend is Achieng')

ALL:            Achieng' oriti  
                    (Achieng' goodbye)  
                    Dhi ited kuon ma odhiek  
                    (Go and cook soft Ugali)

The ending of the singing game in both versions raises cultural issues and in a subtle way reflects children's understanding of their culture.

In the Luhya version, the singing game ends by bidding Awinja goodbye and asking her to stay back and "eat maize bread and "omurele". (a slimy indigenous leafy vegetable). After this end the loser joins the winners and the game may restart with the next group asking for a friend.

Children's flexibility and innocence are revealed in the loser's proud acceptance to join the winning camp. This acceptance is in line with the two communities' values of friendship, love and unity.

Though a simple children's singing game, this ending reveals Luhya children's understanding of their culture. It also foreshadows their marital responsibilities and expectations. It is however ironical that Awinja is told to stay back – with the winners – and eat maize bread and "omurele". This suggests children's view on indigenous leafy vegetables. Their position is not in line with the respect accorded to this vegetable.



To children losing to the opponent group, though accepted, means that Awinja will not receive good welcome as she will only be fed on traditional 'herbs'. This prejudice on indigenous leafy vegetables can be attributed to 'westernization' and is more evident in urban areas and particularly among children.

Oyoo et. al. (2008) argue that indigenous leafy vegetable prejudice is common among urban dwellers and the youth. This prejudice could be as a result of the bitterness, hairiness or the tedious cooking methods that the indigenous vegetables require. Thus in the above children's singing game, the Luhya children ridicule Awinja's new position. This is a friendly "ridicule" as exemplified in the live performance.

This ironical ending is also evident in the Luo version of the same children's singing game. After losing to Group 'A', Group 'B' performers bid Achieng' goodbye and tell her to go and cook 'soft ugali'. However the implication of the use of the Luo word "kuon modhiek" is that this is poorly prepared 'ugali'. The deeper interpretation of this message is that Achieng' is still young and cannot prepare well cooked ugali.

Among the Luo people a newly married woman faced a major test when it came to preparing ugali in the traditional pot. For an immature one the chances were that the pot would break or that the ugali would be "modhiek" (poorly prepared)

The Luo children perform the children's singing game, 'umbe umbe' in two parallel lines though in some variations one line has been identified. The two lines of performers move

as they sing to the action words “umbe umbe”. As the two lines move on dancing as they touch their knees and waists, the leader of the group mentions various things as he/she guides the participants in dancing as they touch their hair, their dresses among others.

The chorus is vigorously danced to as the soloist ululates – A uu wiii and the participants answer in chorus, “chacha cha”. These sound words make the performance end memorably in an entertaining way.

This same children’s singing game is performed by Luhya children but in a circular formation as the children shake their shoulders and dramatize guided by a soloist. However the endings of the two versions are the same as the Luhya one ends:

Solo: Auuuuuii!

All: Cha cha cha!

Many other Luo and Luhya children’s singing games are performed in single line formations as the participants follow the group leader. In the Luhya children’s singing game, “Amabele” (milk), the performers walk in a line as they dance to the tune of the game. The soloist leads the group in a call and response performance as the group repeatedly answers to the soloist’s call, “Amebele” (milk). The group responds by answering “kalimung’ombe” (milk is in the cow).

The chorus adds harmony to the tune thus making it entertaining at the same time educating the young children. This is in line with the community’s love of a cow’s milk.

The Luo children's singing game, 'Akuru Nyabondo' (Pigeon daughter of Bondo), is performed in a single line as the children sing about a pigeon. This singing game is derived from a Luo oral narrative normally told to children. The isolation of this singing game from a narrative is a clear indication of children's interest and memory capacity. This means that as children listen to narratives, there are certain elements they take keen interest in. The game is later dramatized by children since it captures their interest.

Another category of Luo and Luhya children's singing games is that performed in a zigzag line. In such performance, children imitate the movement of certain animals or even human beings. The performance can be done in two lines or a single one but movements are in a zigzag way.

The Luhya children's singing game "Koloti" (zigzag), is performed by two groups of children forming two lines. Each line has its leader and the movement is in a zigzag manner. This singing game talks about the performer's mother being a potter:

Solo: Mama yalingi omulongi wetsindabu  
(My mother was a potter)

All: Koloti  
(Zig-zag )

Solo: Khulonde yaa  
(Let us take this route)

All: Koloti  
(Zig-zag)

Solo: Khutsile yaa  
(Go through here)

All: Koloti.  
(Zig-zag)

In this performance, children sing, run and dance. The game can go on for a long time. The subtle communication in this singing game reveals the child's sense of keen observation of the environment and the imitation that results from this. The potter's movement is described. Traditional potters were/are known to tranverse many villages looking for prospective buyers of their ware.

The Luo children's singing game "Ng'ielo" (python), is performed in a single line that moves in a zigzag manner as children imitate the slithering movement of a python. As noted earlier, this imitation of the python's movement signifies a deeper message and indirectly condemns wicked characters in the society. Though children may not be aware of this sub-textual meaning, their mention of the python "bursting" into the mother-in-law's house directs us to a deeper cultural message. This is also evidence that children's playground games are indeed preservers of cultural aesthetics and norms. It is believed among the Luo people that visiting mothers-in-law without official mission or appointment is a wicked behaviour.

Group formations and dance movements are also common among the Luo and Luhya children's singing games. These kinds of formations are significant in making the participants identify with each other as part of the larger macro society.

These formations encourage children to work together on a non-competitive basis and be able to assimilate cultural values, entertain themselves and also imitate the adult world. Sometimes these performances carry the performers into an imaginary world of fantasy thus contributing to their social and moral development.

As Weche (2000) has noted in his study on how children respond to written works, their responses are crucial in their image formation as they internalize certain ways of behaviour that are culturally appropriate from the books that they read.

Weche's observation directly applies to children's singing games. In these creative outputs of children, the performers learn respect for one another and share in the aesthetics and beliefs of their cultures. This sharing through group performances makes children to have a sense of belonging at the same time enhancing their imagination and sense of wonder.

Group formations are prominent among the Luo people and attest to the community's sense of communality and appreciation of one another. The children's singing game "Paka Gi Oyieyo" (The cat and the Rat) is performed in a group as Luo children imitate their surrounding. In this singing game they dramatize the plight of the rat before a cat. This simple singing game is danced to, particularly the rhythm, created by the repetition of the word 'Oyieyo' (the rat).

Luo children rally with the community's norms and what is considered as virtue by condemning vices and anti-social characters in their games. In the Luo children's singing game, 'Oyundi' (Sparrow), the participants perform in a group as they ridicule the lazy people in society. The image of the sparrow – a common destructive bird in Luoland is used to symbolize lazy people who are also opportunistic. Thus the last line satirizes the "Sparrow" – symbolizing lazy people – who promptly accepts invitation to eat though he had all along declined to perform any communal task in the pretence that his "leg is unwell".

This satire is rooted in the Luo people's aesthetics and belief in hard work. The Luo traditionally lived as an entity and everyone was expected to perform communal duties without excuses. There was a clear division of labour between children, (or the youths), women, men and the elderly. Division of labour among the Luo people is creatively dramatized in many Luo children's singing games including, "Dhako" (woman), "Atis atugna" (Atis let me play), "Utimo ang'o?" (What are you doing?) and others.

In "Atis Atugna" (Atis let me play) Luo children perform in a group as they enumerate the tasks assigned to Atis – a girl child. This group performance though presented from a patriarchal view of the girl-child, is significant in the images children form of themselves and also how they "see" the world. This becomes important in their cultural assimilation and later adjustment in the community as adults. The rhyme of the repetition "Atis" adds to the musicality of the singing game thus making it interesting to the participants.

Other group children's singing games among Luo children juxtapose unrelated items in a kind of nonsense performance that is aimed mainly at entertaining the performers. In "Adush Solea" Luo children perform in a group formation mainly aimed at entertaining the children.

In this singing game unrelated things such as dagger, cloth, big belt, hairstyle, paraffin are put together. This is a common characteristic of children's limericks since their interest is normally on the action that is dramatized rather than the significance of the items mentioned. The mentioning of the items creates a cumulative effect that keeps the child's interest at the peak.

Luo children love action singing games that are vigorously done or involve tangible actions that children perform through role-play. In the singing game, "Utera kanye?" (Where are you taking me?), children tell one of the participants to close his/her eyes and they carry him/her around. The child carried asks; "where are you taking me?" And the group's response varies from stanza to stanza.

What is crucial here is the underlying message on kinship as the group reminds the person that he/she is being taken to "grandmother's place" to eat various dishes. Here young children appreciate the role of the grandmother in taking care of her grandchildren. Indeed among the Luo people, grandmothers played a significant role in the up-bringing of their grandchildren. Because of this, the youths had great respect for them.

In the group formation of Luo children's singing game, "Awino", again Luo children dramatize and dance to their creative game on division of labour. This group performance describes the role of a girl child or woman in the traditional set-up. All the three stanzas of the singing game talk about Awino's tasks. These tasks were traditionally associated with the female figures. The last line of the performance sounds like a lamentation – "Awino nyathiwa" (Awino our sister).

The Luo word "nyathiwa" directly sounds a lament as the children stress the last syllable. This points to the awareness amongst children of the tasks assigned to their genders and how difficult some may be.

Luhya and Luo children have many children's singing games done in group formations. Luhya children perform in a group in their dramatization of "Katimbe" – a singing game in which children sing and dramatize the planting of various grains. The refrain phrase "Kati-katimbe" is repeated as the group mimicks the planting of grains and potatoes. Herein lies the child's knowledge of the crops grown within his/her environment.

The Luhya children's singing games "Ong'ado", "lekha omupira" (stop playing football), and "Ndiegu" are performed in group formations. All the singing games are used to socialize children in matters of Luhya culture and aspirations. Though these are strictly children's creative outputs, their (children's) world view comes out clearly as the world is perceived from a child's point of view.



In “Ong’ado” the participants condemn untidiness as they mock and ridicule Ong’ado who is infested by jiggers. Among the Luhya people, it is believed that jigger infestation is a result of being ‘dirty’ or not caring about one’s hygiene. Laughing and mocking Ong’ado is a direct way of encouraging the performers to be keen on hygiene.

Luhya children creatively fuse humor into their dramatization of Ong’ado’s position by saying that he scratches his body using a maize cob. Ong’ado has also scabies, another skin infection attributed to poor hygiene. The satire on Ong’ado makes the children learn and take care of themselves by bathing regularly.

This singing game suggests children’s awareness on matters of hygiene. The use of the name Ong’ado is likely taken from their observation of a real person in their environment.

The group formations as dramatized by the Luhya and Luo children vary from area to area. Sometimes the performance may begin in a line and end up in group or unison performance. For instance in the earlier Luhya singing game discussed, “Amabele kalimung’ombe” (The milk is in the cow), the singing game is performed in some areas with boys and girls joining in the dramatization.

Two children start the performance as they stand facing one another clapping each others hands. The rest form a circular formation and pass beneath the clapping hands as they sing. After a few rounds, two other children from the circle take over as the dancing and

singing continue. The pattern may go on and on until an adult disrupts them or when they get tired. Basically, this singing game can be said to combine more than one formation.

Such singing games that combine more than one dance formation and movement seem improvised by children themselves because of various factors including their interaction with other children and also exposure to various media. We focus on this at length in chapter four in which we examine the changing trends in Luo and Luhya children's singing games.

The semi-circular formation is also common among the Luo and Luhya children's singing games. This formation, like the circular formation, has clearly set out rules which are enforced by the group leader. Such formations are mainly led by the older children who help the young ones to be creative, imaginative and even test their wit by challenging them.

The singing game "nyama, nyama, nyama" (meat, meat, meat) is sung by children across many Kenyan communities. Among the Luhya the title is "Inyama" (meat). The leader of the group stands in front and the participants form a semi-circle facing him or her. As the leader calls "Inyama" x3 (meat x3) the participants are expected to respond by answering "Inyama" (meat):

Solo: Inyama, inyama, inyama?

(Meat, meat, meat?)

All: Inyamaa!

(Meat)

Solo: Inyama, inyama, inyama?

(Meat, meat, meat?)

All: Inyamaaa

(Meat)

Solo: Ye ing'ombe?

(A cow's meat?)

All: Inyamaaa!

(Meat)

Solo: Ye likondi?

(A sheep's meat?)

All: Inyamaa!

(Meat)

Solo: Ye lipunda?

(A donkey's meat?)

All: (Onjera)

(Silence)

This singing game tests children's understanding of the accepted types of meat in their culture. As the leader mentions the accepted delicacies the group responds by jumping

up and answering, “meat”. Notice that the word meat in the vernacular translation is stressed to add harmony to the performance. The leader goes on mentioning different types of meat until when he/she mentions one that is not accepted within the culture.

At this point any participant who utters the word meat and jumps up is eliminated from the singing game. This may go on until the participants remain few or even the leader remains alone. This logically leads into a new phase of the game.

This pattern and rules are followed by Luo children whose title is “Ringo, ringo” (nyama, nyama). It is important to note that the two communities boarder each other and they share a lot of cultural practices to do with family, marriage, foods and many other rituals. The only practice that separates them is that of male circumcision as an initiation rite. Whereas the Luhya circumcise their males as a graduation into adulthood, the Luo traditionally practised deteething on their males and females as a way of initiating them into adulthood.

However, the Luo have since abandoned the rite of deteething, though the Luhya still strongly believe in circumcision of their males. Luhya and Luo cultural beliefs pertaining to food nevertheless remain almost similar. It is important to note that today many Luos are circumcising their boys. This has been necessitated by the scientific findings that circumcision can reduce ones chances of acquiring HIV/AIDS. Luo politicians have encouraged Luos to circumcise their boys as a way of reducing the chances of HIV infection.

It is important to note that many of the circular games are sometimes improvised by different group leaders who turn them into semi-circular so as to keep keen attention and eye-contact with the performers.

The varying dance formations and movements among the Luo and Luhya as manifested in children's singing games are part of the cultural aesthetics of these two communities. They also attest to Luo and Luhya children's imagination, keen observation of the environment and awareness of their cultural aesthetics and norms.

These dance formations may vary from place to place. We should note that many of them appear in a more elaborate manner in rural areas where the performers are homogenous and therefore perform mainly in their vernacular.

In urban areas, these dance formations may not necessarily be the same as urban children have taken up new cosmopolitan singing games that are mainly done in Kiswahili, English or "sheng" (a concoction of Kiswahili and English).

Chapter four focuses on some of these changing trends in Luhya and Luo children's singing games as reflected in the collected games and also a sample of urban children's singing games sung by Kenyan children who include Luo and Luhya children.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**CHANGING VALUES AND TRENDS IN LUO AND LUHYA**  
**CHILDREN'S SINGING GAMES**

**4.1 Introduction**

Literature as a reflection of a people's struggle in the environment and as man's creative endeavour is characterized by its dynamism and the ability to adapt to the changing social realities. Literature changes according to time. This is because writers and artists exist in different societies at different periods of time. These periods are characterized by various happenings that directly influence the creative forms of the members of that particular community.

Kabira (1988:40) correctly observes that even in oral compositions and performance styles, there is evidence to show that literature has always been dynamic. She argues that in pre-colonial societies artists composed war songs, initiation songs and stories. However with the dawn of colonialism there was disintegration and thus the artist shifted from issues of clans to nationalistic concerns.

Indeed literature cannot be separated from societal changes and happenings. Societal events influence the creation of literature both in content and form. Just as written literature undergoes transformation, oral literature too follows a similar trend.

As societies become more and more modernized, communal coherence in families and clans is disrupted as many people migrate from the rural to urban areas. Instead of being governed by traditional norms and way of life, societies come to be governed by new principles, leading to the decline or loss of distinctive cultural traits.

Interaction with other communities also affect literary content and form. Children's singing games, as part of the mainstream literature, show clear trends of various influences both in performance, wording and even dance formations.

Though the sampled singing games from the two communities were collected from homogenous set-ups of Luhya and Luo children, there is evidence that even as Luo and Luhya children sing in their vernaculars, the very wording, performance and concerns of these singing games manifest and reflect various changing trends among the Luo and Luhya people.

In this chapter we examine some of these changing trends, specifically those reflected in the children's singing games that were collected from the two communities. The other section of the chapter looks at a sample of cosmopolitan children singing games in Kenya specifically the singing games that are performed by Luo and Luhya children but not in their vernacular, thus reflecting a wider picture of children's creative urban semiotics.

## **4.2 Changing Values in Luo Children's Singing Games**

Though the Luo people live in close knit clan system based on the value of communality, many Luo people have interacted with other communities and have also been influenced by Christianity, western education and other political and social forces.

In their play games, Luo children imitate the adult world as they sing and entertain themselves. Their singing games reflect the aesthetics and cultural values of the Luo people. These aesthetics and cultural values have however, been influenced by many factors. A keen participation in Luo children's singing games revealed that Luo children as they sing, play and dramatize in their mother-tongue, their singing games cannot really be said to be exclusive to the Luo world only. The singing games reflect other worlds from a child's point of view. These other worlds are evident to the fact that Luo children's singing games are dynamic and flexible, able to comment on changing values in the wider Kenyan society.

Though children may not be conscious about this, it is true that their singing games reflect the changing socio-economic and other issues in the child's environment. Some of these issues include education, life styles, religion and others.

### **4.2.1 Luo Children's Singing Games and Social Changes**

Luo children's singing games reflect the social changes happening in the Luo society. This reflection is creatively revealed in Luo Children's performances and the texts of the singing games.



In the children's singing game "Atung' Rombo" (Horned Sheep), Luo children imitate the movements of a horned sheep. From the child's point of view and vision, this movement is referred to as "a dance". This fantasy and make-believe is crucial to the child's social development and particularly escape from the provincialism of time and space.

The last two lines of the singing game reflect the child's changing social environment.

The children sing:

Bangping tarino an'go kendo  
(Bang ping tarino what again)  
Kung' fu!  
(Kung' fu!)

The 'bangping tarino' refrain of the singing game is a limerick (nonsense words) but rhymes with the children's allusion to the "Kung Fu" dance style that was popular in Kenya in the 1970's and 1980's. In this dance style two dancers danced closely as they bumped their backs together.

The 'bangping' limerick thus alludes to the bumping style. It is interesting that in the performance children imitate this bumping style with the singing game ending with the emphasis of the word "Kung Fu!"

In this children's singing game one notices how Luo children move away from singing and dramatizing on traditional dance styles such as 'twist' and 'Dodo' to a new style, "Kung' Fu".

In the singing game “Kababa”, Luo children comment on changing social trends particularly on the presence of police officers in society. The singing game is structured in four stanzas. Each stanza has its special focus:

Kababa wanai mana karombo,  
(In our society we will fight like sheep)  
Wanai mana karombo  
(We will fight like sheep)  
Karombo wanai, mana karombo  
(Fighting like sheep, we will fight like sheep)

Kababa wana pur mana kadhano  
(In our society we will dig like men)  
Wanapur mana kadhano  
(We will dig like men)  
Puro ka dhano, wanapur mana kadhano  
(Digging like men, we will dig like men)

Kababa wana miel mana ka ofisa  
(In our society we will dance like an officer)  
Wana miel man ka ofisa  
(We will dance like an officer)  
Miel ka ofisa wana miel ka ofisa  
(Dancing like an officer, we will dance like an Officer)

Kababa wana wer mana ka ngai  
(In our society we will sing like a songbird)  
Wana wer mana ka ngai  
(We will sing like a songbird)  
Wero ka ngai, wana wer mana ka ngai  
(Singing like a songbird, we will sing like a singbird.)

In the first and fourth stanzas, Luo children imitate the world of animals; “fighting like a sheep” and “singing like a songbird”. This reflects the children’s fascination with what happens in the environment. This fascination with the environment reflects a childlike vision that is characteristic of young children. It is also part of their make-believe world.

The second stanza reveals the child's keen observation of what adults do in their day to day life. The Luo are an agricultural and pastoral community. In the traditional rural set-ups, people till land using hoes and "jembes". In this singing game Luo Children imitate and sing about their immediate environment. The vernacular word "dhano" translates to human beings. Children want to dig and till land just like the other human beings they observe in society. The desire to emulate human activities is significant to the children's moral and social development.

In the third stanza the performers reveal social changes in their society. They talk about dancing like "an officer". This alludes to the police marching which seems to fascinate children. In the performance they imitate the marching movements of the police. This is a reflection of the child's understanding of social changes in the society imitated. Traditionally there were no policemen in the Luo society.

Luo children's oral creative works reflect changing social circumstances in the Luo society both in performance and the diction of the texts. In the children's singing game "Gaudencia", Luo children reflect traditional values and the new modern values in the society. They sing and dramatize about Gaudencia, Okumu's sister. The choice of the name "Gaudencia" is significant since it reflects the changing values in the child's society.

"Gaudencia" is a Christian name that reflects the interaction with Christianity. Traditionally Luos did not have Christian or Muslim names. The existence of such

names shows the community's interaction with other cultures. Luo children were named after their living dead (according to Mbiti 1969 this term refers to people who have recently died) and ancestors, time of birth (eg. morning, afternoon, evening and night), place of birth eg. on the road, time of season among others.

In the children's singing game "Gaudencia" Luo children also reflect a movement away from traditional values to adoption of modern values. In the singing game Gaudencia's leg is sprained. She is told to report to the father but her father tells her to report to the mother. What is significant here is her mother's advice that she should go to hospital.

Traditionally there were no hospitals in the Luo community. There were traditional healers who were consulted in cases of sickness. These diviners and healers were respected and represented a special social class in the community. However, because of colonization and Christianization of the community, there was the introduction of hospitals with doctors and nurses.

When Gaudencia goes to hospital, she is asked to produce her "card". Here the card refers to the National Identity card or hospital card. These are symbols of modernization and manifestations of the changing social values. Gaudencia tells the hospital people that she is a school girl and has no "card".

In this narrative children's singing game, the hospital management wants to know Gaudencia's teacher's name. This is to prove that she is a school girl. Gaudencia reveals

that her teacher is John from “Kisii”. The Luo translation “ja Kisii” means a person from the Abagusii community of Kenya.

This simple singing game reveals the changing value of education and also cross-cultural interaction. It is important to note that the Abagusii belong to the wider Bantu speaking communities of Kenya and they border the Luo people of the southern Nyanza region.

In the same singing game, the hospital management wants to know if Gaudencia’s teacher canes pupils. She answers that he does not cane them. Again this inquiry and response reflects the changing societal values in Kenya. During colonial days in Kenya, the British believed in the caning of the African pupils and students as a way of making them “learn” and to instill discipline in them. This was basically based on their racial stereotypes that it was hard for a black person to learn without being smacked.

Caning of pupils and students was continued by the first regime after independence until when it was officially abolished in the year 2002 through a circular from the ministry of education. This children’s singing game reveals these changing social values.

From a childlike vision the children’s dramatization ends up by revealing how pupils are taught at school. Gaudencia reveals that they are taught the basic “a, e, i, o, u” implying that she is in the lower primary school.

Changing values in the Luo society range from human interaction, to games, and human tastes of different foods. Traditionally the Luo people were also fishermen and had an affinity to the river and the Lake. This is why they have been referred to as the River-Lake Nilotes. In many Luo children's singing games images of the lake and the river are prominent. There is also a love of fish - different types of fishes from the surrounding lake.

However, as Luo children perform their singing games, there is an overt revelation of some changing values on the taste of fish as a delicacy. Oyoo et.al. (2008:68) attribute these taste changes to various factors including education, preparation and urbanization.

They also note how the changing society plays a role in this:

Cultural forces constantly mould and shape human biology and behaviour. During the last millennium many African Cuisines experienced changes by induced economic, colonial and political impacts. Even today food habits are under siege with some fast disappearing... adaptation has meant evolution of Luo culture with varying and selective propagation, diffusion and assimilation of indigenous and foreign elements.

In the Luo children's singing game "Adila mit" (sour milk is sweet), children sing about a traditional food (sour milk) but also talk about the changing taste on fish such as the Nile Perch and dagger:

Jomoko bende kawacho ni mbuta go omena  
(Some people say that Nile Perch and dagger)  
chiemo mojoga, mbuta dum na ahinya.  
(Is bad food, Nile Perch smells bad.)

This dramatization reveals the community's changing values on food tastes. It is important to note that Nile Perch was introduced in Lake Victoria in the 1950's by the British colonialists as a sport fish but gradually gained popularity as a delicacy among the Luo and Luhya people.

In this children's singing game, Luo children dramatize and imitate the values of their society. In other singing games they imitate these changing values and make their innocent comments on them. In the singing game "Dereba" (Driver), Luo children give caution based on the adults' point of view but from a childlike vision. The singing game is divided into three main stanzas with each stanza dramatizing children's love of action.

In each stanza the performers urge the 'driver' to increase speed but warn against wreckless driving:

Riembo ga ka ing'eyo ni nyuol bende tek x2

(Drive knowing that giving birth is hard x2)

This simple children's creative output which is performed in a line as the leader acts and role-plays the driver, with an imaginary steering wheel, comments on a serious problem in contemporary Kenya. It has been reported that many of the deaths on the Kenyan roads are caused by wreckless driving.

The symbolic warning that "giving birth is hard" emphasizes the sanctity of life; that life should be protected. The road infrastructure in Kenya has also been blamed for many

accidents. Indeed many roads are in poor condition, with a lot of potholes. In this singing game Luo children also warn the driver to take note of this:

Riembo ga ka ing'eyo ni ndara bende rach x2

(Drive knowing that the road is bad x2)

In the second stanza the children symbolically communicate their fears and zest for life. This is artistically communicated through the symbolism of “Ugali” (a local bread made out of maize flour). As they urge their leader (Driver) to increase speed they caution:

Riembo ga ka ing'eyo ni kuon bende mit x2

(Drive knowing that Ugali is still very sweet x2)

This reference to tangible things in their performances attest to what Piaget (cited in Tucker 1981) has argued that up to a certain age, children think in a more concrete way than they do later in their lives. Children prefer things that appeal to their senses. This is clearly illustrated in this singing game.

The repetition of the words “Driver Driver” adds to the musicality of the performance as the participants follow their leader in a line and enjoy the music of the singing game. The singing game entertains them, creates group unity among them and foremost, subtly communicates the children’s understanding of their environment from a child’s point of view.



In other Luo children's singing games, children comment on contemporary issues such as sports and others. In such singing games children show their love of sports and other activities that involve children in society.

In the children's singing game, "Japuonj moro" (a certain teacher) Luo children dramatize in a call and response performance. In this call and response dramatization children tell the story of a certain teacher who went to collect sports medals from their nearest town, Kisumu:

- Solo: Japuonj moro nyocha okwayo rusa  
(A certain teacher asked permission)  
Ni odwa onge e juma ni.  
(That he won't be around this week)
- Chorus: Odhi Kanye  
(Where is he going?)
- Solo: Japuonj odhi Kisumu gi lolwe  
(The teacher is going to Kisumu by lake)
- Chorus: Oomo Ang'o?  
(What is he going to bring?)
- Solo: Japuonj oomo okombe gi tate  
(The teacher is going to bring medals)
- Chorus: Omiyo ng'a  
(Who is going to be given?)
- Solo: Japounj omiyo Anyango jalocho  
(The teacher is going to give Anyango the champion)
- Chorus: Oloyo adi  
(How many goals did she score?)
- Solo: Oloyo miche gi miche  
(She scored hundreds and hundreds)

In this Luo children's singing game, children celebrate the achievements of one of their own, Anyango. They narrate and dramatize how the teacher asked for permission to go to Kisumu (the provincial headquarters of Nyanza province and the third largest city in Kenya) to collect medals for Anyango.

This narrative singing game reveals children's involvement in competitive games. It is important to note that Kisumu is the headquarters of Nyanza Province and mainly forms the peak of school competitions when all schools in the province meet there for competitive games such as volleyball, netball, football, hockey and many others.

Primary schools are involved in these games that mainly start from the zonal levels. In the singing game, children reveal that Anyango scored many goals; according to the child's perspective, "hundreds and hundreds". This is the child's celebration of his/her heroes/heroines. Children will in most cases elevate their heroes and heroines to superhuman levels. This is in line with their love of fantasy. Thus when asked the number of goals that Anyango scored, they have no exact number but, "hundreds and hundreds". In such a singing game children are able to learn and emulate the winner, Anyango. Indeed as Hopkin (1984:1) has observed, such singing games are "an essential part of children's development". The games expose children to "the cultural elements of their own society" within which social development and the growth of problem-solving skills are provided.

The identity of the teacher is not revealed. This is a stylistic feature of making the singing game applicable in various contexts. The use of “Anyango” as the main character in the singing game shows that this is a game played by girls, preferably netball.

These competitions are new and reveal how the Luo society has been changing to adapt to the various political, economic, social and other circumstances. Traditionally, there were games such as wrestling and others but these were done in limited settings such as the village, with various clans competing. However, today there are games done at district level, provincial level and national level. The Luo child is therefore exposed to different types of competitions that enable him/her to interact with other children from various formal schools.

Such competitive games are in line with the Luo children’s belief in exercise. They are always seen playing and exercising in different ways. Their singing game “Kangato ok opangore” (if one doesn’t exercise), celebrates the need to exercise, play and grow.

The child’s belief in the importance of exercise and play can be directly attributed to the teacher’s advice and counselling. Teachers, in most cases, encourage children to exercise and play, particularly during the free time in between class periods. Since children trust adults and more so their teachers, whom they view as role models, they imitate what the teachers tell them to do. Sometime this imitation is done in quite a humorous way.

In this singing game “if one doesn’t exercise” Luo children seem to be adhering to their teachers’ counsel:

Ka ngato ok opangore  
(If one doesn’t exercise)

Ok onyalo riek  
(He/She can’t be clever)

Chonge Otimo mbata  
(The knees weaken)

Wiye dok chien  
(The brain slows down)

Onyosore ka punda  
(He/She weakens like a donkey)

Ma nyosore gi wuoth  
( Tired of walking)

Adieri pangruok ojiwowa  
(Truly, exercise strengthens us)

Pangruok ojiwo wa  
(Exercise strengthens us)

In the singing game, Luo children subtly reveal the benefits of exercising bodies: mental alertness, and physical strength. This singing game is a good example of how children can create and improvise from what they have heard, seen or even been told. As they perform this game, they begin by strengthening their hands and showing how the knees can slacken due to lack of exercise.

The second stanza humorously imitates the movement of a tired donkey. This section is the most entertaining as the performers try to out-do each other in the imitation of the

donkey's movement. The last line in the singing game is an emphasis on the significance of exercise to the physical development and mental ability of the child.

As earlier noted, this singing game is evidence of how children take adults' counsel and instructions seriously to the extent that they even dramatize the instructions in their own singing games.

Oral instructions from either adults or older siblings in the Luo community first appear in the children's learning process familiarizing them with the rules and routines of the game. As Hopkin (1984:5) has observed, regardless of the slight difference that occurs in the rhymes or rhythmic patterns resulting from the oral instructions, children stick to the initial version of any game they learn due to their "Culturally conservative" nature.

However, it is important to observe that Luo children's singing games are spontaneous dramatizations that do not require any script or rehearsal. What comes out clearly from the above singing game on "exercise" is that children not only listen and take in instructions from the adults, but they also observe the environment, both physical and social and imitate it in a creative way.

Their imitations reveal changing societal values in the Luo community and thus an indication that children's creative output mirrors societal values and changing trends from an artistic and imaginative level.

Other Luo children's singing games reflect changes in terms of the general communication. Because of interaction with other communities and also the use of Kiswahili as a national language, Luo children tend to use different dialects in their performances. They borrow some words from the neighbouring communities particularly the Luhya.

In the singing game "Umbe, umbe", the title seems a limerick to the performers because within the context of their dramatization the words only add rhythm to the performance. However, among the Luhya people these words mean "give me, give me". The Luo children have borrowed the phrase as a limerick to add rhythm and pattern to their performance. The singing game is performed in circle formation as the participants touch various parts of their bodies as directed by the soloist.

The singing game also fuses in Swahili words, though pronounced in the accent of the Luos. The soloist directs the performers:

Soloist:	Erick luora (Erick walk around me)
Chorus:	Umbe umbe (Umbe umbe)
Soloist:	Sika nywele (Touch your hair)
Chorus:	Umbe umbe (Umbe umbe)
Soloist:	Sika marinda (Touch your dress)

Chorus:	Umbe umbe (Umbe umbe)
Soloist:	A uuwiii (A uuwiiii!)
Chorus:	Chacha cha (Chacha cha)

The words “sika nywele” (touch your hair) and “sika marinda” (touch your dress) are Swahili words fused into the vernacular performance. Though the correct pronunciation is “shika”, the Luo pronounce it as “sika” because there is no “sh” vowel in the Luo language. Because of the influence of the first language, many children, including adults still pronounce “sh” as “si”.

Children’s singing games have the characteristics of putting together unrelated items just to create harmony and rhythm. Many such singing games have been described as nonsense rhymes or limericks. However, a keen examination of these singing games reveals the child’s observation of his/her immediate environment.

Oberstein-Lesnik (1994:95) has observed that jokes that are invented by children “can be rewarding”. A lot of playground rhymes such as singing games seem to be making fun of authority or else they deal with more or less directly societal aesthetics and changing trends in terms of values.

In the children singing game, “Adush Solea”, Luo children put together many unrelated items but a critical evaluation of the text and its performance reveal a lot about the society of the child.

The first stanza of the singing game talks about two types of fishes popular with the Luo people; dagger and dried fish. The performers bring in other unrelated items such as “kitenge” cloth (a popular type of cloth that is used to make attractive dresses for women, it is believed to have originated from the East African Coast). The same stanza talks about a “big belt” (Madiaba). The word “madiaba” is commonly used by children to refer to big things.

The second stanza refers to the changing values in terms of new hairstyles that have become popular with both men and women, particularly the “rasta” style. As the performers mention these items and values, they reveal their understanding of the high prices of commodities, particularly paraffin. The shopkeeper, Juma, tells them in the role-play that the price is the same all over the place. As children imitate and role-play Juma, the shopkeeper, they move in a ring that marks the end of the performance.

The title of the singing game is taken from a popular petroleum jelly, Solea, but the performers add the word ‘Adush’ to it to create rhythm and add harmony to the performance.



The oral rendition and texts of these Luo children singing games and others reveal children's creativity. Like adults' literature, these children's simple rhymes are reflections of the child's society from a childlike vision. They reflect changing trends in terms of societal values. The Luo children's playground games thus become significant repertoires of the changing trends and values in the macro Luo community.

Children comment on such changing values as urbanization and the movement from the rural to urban centres. In their innocent dramatizations, Luo children comment on these changing values in a creative way.

This is the case in the singing game "Soore yawa soore" (Gather around now, gather around). In this group performance children dramatize as they gather around their group leader and join in the innocent lament:

Soore yawa soore x2  
(Gather around now gather around x2)

Nyara manyocha anyuolo soore,  
(My daughter that I just begot the other day)

Yawa soore chuore adhigo  
(Has gone with her husband)

Mombasa soore yawa soore.  
(To Mombasa gather around now gather around)

Ochako odhigo Nakuru, soore  
(They've gone to Nakuru too, gather around)

Yawa soore, kendo Odhigo Nairobi, soore yawa soore  
(To Nairobi, gather around now gather around)

Anyango chung mondo imielie  
(Anyango, stand up and dance)

Mondo onenie soore yawa soore.  
(So that they can see you, gather around now gather around)

The group performance talks about rural-urban migration, a common factor among the Luo people. Many of those moving to urban centres move in search of jobs. However, this singing game puts emphasis on the fact that there is a young girl recently married. The children's choice of the euphemism, "My daughter whom I begot the other day", is their creative way of revealing that the girl is a young one.

This expression is taken from adults' conversation and philosophical way of communicating. Instead of calling someone "young", the Luo will claim that the person was "born the other day". This choice of words is imitated by children in their comment on early marriages and the movement to urban centres.

In this dramatization, the young girl moves with the husband through the major towns in Kenya; Mombasa, Nakuru and Nairobi. This movement is evidence of children's knowledge of how people move from town to town in search of livelihood. Though the singing game does not directly mention job hunting, the gathering around metaphor suggests getting together to listen to the news of the young girl, moving from place to place with her husband.

The news is broken in the form of a lament with the repetition of the line 'Gather around now, gather around'. The dramatization ends with the group leader calling upon one of

the participants, Anyango, to stand and dance so that she is noticed by the others. The performance goes on with the leader calling upon different participants to dance.

This singing game is a good example of children's imitation of the adult world as they invent their own rules and regulations of role-play. Their singing games thus contribute to our understanding of the changing trends and values in the wider society.

#### **4.2.2 Luo Children's Singing Games on the Value of Formal Education**

Luo children's singing games exhibit various trends in terms of the child's keen observation of the changing Luo society and also the child's creativity. These singing games confirm that children's literature, like the mainstream literature, reflects society's dynamism.

Traditionally, the Luo people had an informal type of education in which the youths were trained through oral narratives and also as apprentices to adults who taught them skills like fishing, iron work, farming and others; however, with the advent of formal education as a result of colonization and western education, the Luo embraced the new education system.

Luo children's singing games reflect these values of formal education with its benefits. In the singing game "Japuonj puonja" (Teacher teaches me) the benefits of formal education are dramatized as Luo children role-play the significance of the teacher:

Japuonj puonja ni mondo ang'e ndiko  
(Teacher teaches me to know how to write)

Ndiko ber x2  
(Writing is good x2)  
Japuonj puonja ni mondo ang'e somo  
(Teacher teaches me to know how to read)  
Somo ber x2  
(Reading is good x2)

Japuonj puonja ni mondo ang'e kwano  
(Teacher teaches me to know Maths)  
Kwano ber x2  
(Maths is good x2)  
Japuonj puonja ni mondo ang'e Kisungu  
(Teacher teaches me to know English)  
Kisungu ber x2  
(English is good x2)

Japuonj puonja ni mondo ang'e ndiko  
(Teacher teaches me to know how to write)  
Ndiko ber x2  
(Writing is good x2)  
Aah mama, somo ber  
(Dear mother, learning is good)  
Makata itama, somo ber.  
(Even though you do not want me to learn, learning is good.)

In the singing game Luo children emphasize the significance of formal education with its skills: reading, writing and arithmetics. As children perform this game, they emphasize these skills through syncopation.

The last stanza of the singing game uses repetition to stress the importance of formal education. The singing game ends with the children criticizing their 'mother' for trying to stop them from acquiring formal education. It is important to note that the last two lines of the singing game seem to echo the views of some traditionalists within the community.

Formal education in many African societies was embraced but with a lot of reservations. These reservations can partly be explained in the fact that this education was associated with colonization and exploitation of the natives. It was also meant to condition the natives to hate themselves and even their culture. This is what Ngugi (1981) has emphasized.

However, given that many traditional African societies were patriarchal, there was a lot of gender imbalance in the reception of this formal education. Among the Luo people, girls were for a long time sidelined when it came to formal education. Indeed many girls were stopped from going to school and forced into early marriages.

The last two lines of the above Luo children's singing game may be attributed to the girl child's lament on this discrimination.

Indeed a sample of Luo children's singing games seems to emphasize the need to educate the girl-child. In the singing game "Adhis", the girl child is encouraged to acquire formal education and move away from the traditional domestic chores:

Adhis x2  
(Adhis x2)  
Adhis nyako ka iwango agulu  
(Adhis if you burn the cooking pot)  
Mar chielo mbuta,  
(Of frying Nile perch)  
Ok nene okonyi e ngima ma sani  
(It will not help you in contemporary life).

Tem matek pio pio iyud barupi  
(Try hard and get your certificate)  
Kuon biro ka opong'o mesa, woug na oko

(Ugali will be full on the table, get out)  
I take the ring'o halafu, u take the chogo.  
(I take the meat and you take the bone x2)

These two stanzas are repeated as Luo children encourage Adhis (the girl child) to acquire formal education so that she is respected in society.

The first stanza is ironical and ridicules the girl-child for concentrating on domestic chores without thinking about her future. The choice of the Luo word “Ka iwango” (as you burn) is significant; it communicates Adhis’ concentration on cooking.

Among the Luo people, traditionally women were expected to take care of their children and husbands. Their responsibilities were limited to home and specifically to the kitchen. However, in this Luo children’s singing game, the girl child is encouraged to acquire a certificate so as to cope with the fast changing society.

The second stanza is ironical and goes on to reveal the discrimination the girl child faces if she is not empowered through education.

I take the ring'o halafu, u take the chogo x2

(I take the meat and you take the bone x2)

These lines encourage Adhis to work harder. Luo children mix Dholuo with English and Kiswahili in this performance to reinforce the message of the need for the girl child to acquire formal education.

The significance of formal education is also emphasized in other Luo children's singing games already examined. These singing games include "Gaudencia", "Obel" (Doctor), "Japuonj moro" (A certain teacher) and "Ka ngato ok opangore" (If one doesn't exercise).

The changing values in Luo children's singing games show that children are keen observers of what is happening around them. Through vivid imagination they creatively express these changing values in their singing games. The singing games also reveal that children's literature is dynamic and reflects the values of the macro society in which children live.

From a child's point of view the games imaginatively show the child's perspective of the wider social and physical world. And as is true with their growth and social development, children imitate and identify with their immediate environment. The values dramatized and performed in their singing games cannot therefore be divorced from the norms, expectations, changing values and the aesthetics of their community.

#### **4.3 Changing Trends and Values in Luhya Children's Singing Games**

Like the Luo children, Luhya children are also keen observers of their environment. This is clearly manifested in the changing values and trends in Luhya children's singing games. Though most of the traditional Luhya singing games focus more on traditional foods and relationships, a number of the sampled singing games reflect new values that deviate from the Luhya traditional aesthetics.

These values range from social relationships to other issues to do with new elements that can be directly associated with the community's interaction with other cultures and also inculturation.

These changes are dramatized as Luhya children sing in their vernacular following well known dance formations and use of images and symbols that directly and indirectly reveal their environment and identification with the same. This validates our preposition that children's singing games are creative works that, from an imaginative panel, reveal a peoples' aesthetics and their changing circumstances.

#### **4.3.1 Luhya Children's Singing Games and the Changing Socio-Economic Values**

Though Luhya children perform their singing games in vernacular, with characteristic formations in line with their community's aesthetics, many of these performances reflect a more contemporary reality in terms of changing socio-economic values. The singing game "Mama mbe Tsimbindi" (mother give me cowpeas) fuses traditional and contemporary elements.

The singing game centers around a traditional leafy vegetable food but fuses in other types of foods that reflect the community's changing socio-economic values. It mentions non-traditional seeds and grains such as beans and maize. It is important to note that these two are indications of culture interaction with other communities since they don't form part of the Luhya traditional crops.



Other Luhya children's singing games reflect the changing economic trends and the society's move away from strictly traditional practices to embracing new changes. The singing game "Omwicha wefwe" (Our friend) focuses on friendship and the need for unity. This is symbolized in the performance formation as the two groups engage in a tug-of-war to get their selected friend. However, it is important to note that this singing game reveals more values and aesthetics of the Luhya community. As the groups engage in the performance, one group asks how many cows the other group will pay if it is given Fei, (the girl). Traditionally the Luhya paid bride price in form of cows. The group says that they shall pay ten cows but the other group goes on to demand just more than cows:

Mnakhwa esende chinga x3

(How much money shall you pay x3)

The money economy is new to the Luhya Community, particularly as a form of paying dowry. This reveals children's understanding of their immediate environment. Indeed, today, dowry payment is always accompanied by some money. Payment of cows is not enough. Luhya children innocently dramatize this as they entertain and inform themselves.

Because of changing economic values and trends, many communities insist that the payment of dowry be done in form of cows to fulfill a traditional requirement. However, cows alone are not enough as the bride's people will always expect hard cash to accompany the cows.

In the singing game “Mother Shifyanani” (Mother Dolly), Luhya children reveal, from a child’s point of view, the changing socio-economic trends. In the singing game mother Dolly’s baby falls sick and is taken to a doctor. What the Luhya children innocently say about the doctor is quite revealing:

Yahenza mwana  
(He looked at the baby)  
Na Muvererera  
(He shook his head)  
Yavora mama amure  
(He said mother Dolly put)  
Khushiteli  
(Her straight to bed.)

Yavukila ikaratasi ni kalamu  
(He took a paper and a pen)  
Khurula musiko kwe kwe  
(From his bag)  
Nahandika khu ikaratasi khu  
(And he wrote on the paper)  
Likovi likali likali  
(A big big bill.)

This simple Luhya children’s singing game reveals the changing socio-economic values in the Luhya community and Kenya as a whole. Mother Dolly has to take her sick child to a modern doctor. Images of paper, pen and hospital bed reveal that the doctor is not a traditional one but a modern one. And the children unconsciously satirize the doctor’s concern with money and not the health of the child. The doctor looks at the baby and shows some kind of pity. He tells mother Dolly to put the baby on the hospital bed, takes a paper and a pen and presents “A big bill”.

The performers emphasize the bill and do not mention anything on the treatment of the child. The issue of doctors being more materialistic and moving away from the 1948 World Medical Association Principle has become quite prevalent. Many doctors are concerned with money and not the health of their patients.

The 1948 World Medical Association Principle summarises the policy which was adopted by the World Medical Association in 1948 which in brief states, “The health of my patient will be my first duty” (cited in Oruka 1990: 71). As Oruka (1990:71) emphasizes:

The principles of medical ethics are principles which spell out the ethical rules which doctors or patients and all reasonable people in society should accept as the criteria for rational moral decisions about the treatment administered to the sick.

In the above Luhya children’s singing game, as it is the case with many doctors in Kenya today, the health of the sick is secondary to money, or the bill to be paid. Ironically we have had cases where doctors have declined to attend to the sick if a down payment of the total bill is not made!

Luhya children’s singing games comment, sometimes in an ironical way, on the aesthetics and changing values in the Luhya community. As Wharton-Boyd (1983:44) has correctly observed, singing games are usually passed on from child generation to child generation with little interference from the adults. However, this does not mean that the singing games do not undergo variations and modifications in relation to the changing trends and values in the society. Indeed as Wharton-Boyd adds:

Although they (children's singing games) have roots in the distant past, singing games are constantly reshaped as they pass from succeeding child generations, a process that gives them a unique creative quality. Having survived through the oral traditions, children's singing games seem to exist as long as there are children to keep them alive and generative.

This is the case with Luo and Luhya children's singing games. Luhya children, for instance, sing and dramatize in a hide-and-seek game about a lost letter.

In the singing game, "Ibarua yange ikorere" (my letter is lost) Luhya children reflect the new trend of communicating through letters. This is a movement away from traditional means of communication like sending a messenger and use of traditional instruments such as horns and drums. In this singing game, Luhya children dramatize on an imaginary letter that is said to have disappeared. They all search for the lost letter in an action packed performance that reveals the child's love of fantasy and imagination.

It is important to note that this same performance is shared by Luo children. The performance is exactly the same. Though children may not communicate in letters, they appreciate and understand that a letter as a form of communication has its demerits. The dramatization shows that a letter can get lost hence the performers' vigorous search for it.

This is the child's creative imagination that is communicated in an ingenious use of language. Children are creative in their own ways. Their creative repertoire cannot therefore be overlooked since they reflect the child's understanding of the wider aesthetics and values of his/her community. These aesthetics and values are part and

parcel of the changing trends and circumstances as human beings struggle in their environment to actualize themselves and as a way of becoming.

Changing values in every community are a result of the community's struggles to understand themselves and their environment. The changes can also be a result of the community's interaction with others. In the Luhya children's singing game "ingokho" (hen), children show their innocent understanding of their environment.

Though the game focuses on a traditional value using the concrete image of a hen, the singing game juxtaposes more unrelated things that make it a limerick. Though it is a limerick, the mention of a rich man from Europe is significant.

The socialization and conditioning of the Luhya children make them view any one from Europe as "rich". This is why they mention a rich man from Europe who cries "Zwi, zwi, zwi". This mention, however, reveals that children even at their limited level of experience have already internalized certain beliefs that come from the macro society.

Luhya children's singing games clearly reveal the Luhya child's experiences. These experiences are part of the socio-economic changes within the Luhya child's macro community. In their performances, Luhya children, though unconsciously, communicate many changing values in their society.

The singing games that are performed in the Luhya language follow the dance formations and movements that Luhya children have taken from the earlier generations. These dance

formations and movements also reflect various values that are part of the changing socio-economic organizations and trends in the Luhya community.

Matters of property ownership are mentioned and reveal how these have also been affected by contemporary trends. Luhya children recognize and appreciate these changes as they sing about animals, birds, human characters and perform many nonsense singing games that are meant for entertainment.

As they entertain themselves, children subtly communicate these values and show the child's innocence and keen observation of the environment.

#### **4.4 Luo and Luhya Urban Children's Singing Games and their Aesthetic Value**

Luo and Luhya children have been affected by the societal changes that have taken place in Kenya. Some of these changes have been necessitated by the rural urban migration, western education, Christianity and many other values that are associated with the West.

The school system in Kenya has also brought Luo and Luhya children into interaction with other communities. Many Luo and Luhya children thus find themselves in cosmopolitan set-ups. These new settings require modification of some elements as performed in the vernacular children's singing games, total improvisation of the singing games or even the performance of singing games that can communicate to children in a cosmopolitan setting.

In many cosmopolitan areas, Luo and Luhya children form part of the performances and dramatization of various children's singing games. They join other children from other communities in performing urban children's singing games. These singing games are performed in English, Swahili or a mixture of Swahili and English commonly known as 'Sheng' in Kenya.

Many of these singing games reveal how traditional values are undergoing change. Children engage in the singing games in groups within estates, schools, church and even at the market as they disengage themselves from adults and creatively dramatize in their own games.

Children from various ethnic groups come together to perform. In their performances, it is evident that children don't discriminate. Indeed they play and dramatize as friends, without the prejudice that many adults harbour on other communities.

The texts and performance styles of these cosmopolitan children's singing games show the child's awareness of society and also the need for unity and friendship. Though many of the cosmopolitan children's singing games are performed in English and Swahili, there are others that fuse in vernacular words from various communities.

In this section we examine how Luo and Luhya children are involved in the singing and dramatization of urban or cosmopolitan children's singing games. It is important to note that the research was limited to Luo and Luhya children alone. Thus even in the samples

of children's singing games taken in a more cosmopolitan settings such as schools in the urban centres of Nyanza and the Western province, and within estates in Nairobi, Kisumu, Kakamega and others, our focus was only on Luo and Luhya children.

In cosmopolitan areas in Kenya, children from various ethnic groups perform a variety of children's singing games. They entertain themselves while playing together. Even when alone, Luo and Luhya children carry on with various performances that reflect the urban influence, and also the new values emerging from their involvement with other children, western education, the electronic media, Christianity and others.

Luo and Luhya children are involved in the performance of the children's singing game, "Piki piki maua" (Motorbike flowers). In this singing game, children show their understanding of the immediate environment and also their imitation of the same. The singing game is performed in a kind of reggae dance style. The participants form a circle dance within the circle in a reggae style.

At the end of the singing game the soloist calls upon the next dancer. The performance requires a lot of creativity as the participants are expected to think of something they have experienced in the urban set up. There is much action in the performance. In the singing game, Luo and Luhya children reveal their keen observation of their immediate environment as they mention various things observed:

Soloist:           Piki piki maua x2  
                      (Motorbike flowers x2)



All:	Auaa! (Auaa!)
Soloist:	Nilienda tao (I went to town)
All:	Auaa! (Auaa!)
Soloist:	Nikakuta dame (I met a lady)
All:	Auaa! (Auaa!)
Soloist:	Hakukuwa dame (She was not a lady)
All:	Auaa! (Auaa!)
Soloist:	Alikuwa Giraffe (She was a giraffe)
All:	Auaa! (Auaa!)

The performers mention various animals from their immediate experience and symbolically fuse them in the game. A beautiful girl is compared to a giraffe. The comparison of the beautiful girl and the giraffe enhances the performers' imagination. The singing game is brief and mainly repeated as various performers take up the role of the soloist.

Apart from the stylistic features of repetition and symbolism, this children's singing game also uses different languages. Though it is performed in Swahili, there is the fusion of 'Sheng' (a concoction of English and Swahili) and also English. The word, "Tao" is a Sheng word meaning "town". The word "Dame" is used to mean a beautiful girl.

It is important to note that children are part of the wider society and do imitate different values that are contemporary in society. The fusion of 'Sheng' in their performance is a clear evidence of their imitation of the values pertinent in their society.

Another children's urban singing game performed by Luo and Luhya children is "Obingo". In this group performance the participants are divided into two groups that compete in creating performance situations. The participants are given names of things such as drinks, vegetable and others.

The competition lies in coming up with categories of items and the side that cannot improvise loses. This is repeatedly done as the two groups entertain themselves and also learn. They dance and clap their hands as they sing to the melody of the text:

All:           Obingo obingo  
                  (Obingo obingo)

Soloist:       Mama yangu ni Fanta  
                  (My mother is Fanta)  
                  Baba yangu ni Coke  
                  (My Father is coke)  
                  Mimi hapa ni Crest  
                  (And I am Crest)  
                  Sisi wote ni masoda  
                  (All of us are Sodas)

All:           Obingo obingo  
                  (Obingo obingo)

Soloist:       Mama yangu ni Orange  
                  (My mother is Orange)  
                  Baba yangu ni Mango  
                  (My Father is Mango)  
                  Mimi hapa ni Plums  
                  (And I am Plums)  
                  Sisi wote ni matunda

(All of us are fruits)

All:               Obingo obingo, obi obi obingo

This is an interesting children's singing game. The soloist from either group has to identify a category of items and make conclusions. This singing game shows how children are creative and even logical in their own ways. The premises they make come directly from the environment and the conclusion must be in line with the premises; Mango, Orange and Plums are fruits.

In this simple singing game children learn about different types of things. The singing game tests their wit and enhances their imagination and creativity. Repetition of the words "Obingo, obingo obi obi" adds harmony and rhythm to the performance. Children enjoy the musicality created through the technique of repetition.

Urban children's singing games utilize a lot of styles, including use of nonsense rhymes. The singing game "Jingaru – oya" (jingaru – oh yes) is such a performance. In this performance, Luo and Luhya children are involved in a circle performance. They vigorously dance as they call upon various participants to join the circle performance. They join and move into the centre of the circle and show off in a unique style. This goes on as various participants join and enter the circle. Once at the centre of the circle, the participant takes up the role of the soloist. The performance is in English.

This singing game is performed in a question and answer form – call and response:

Call:           Jingaru Oya x2  
                   Jingaru Oh yes x4  
                   Are you ready?  
                   For what?

Response:     For a jig

Call:           Jig what?

Response:     Jingaru oya  
                   (Jingaru oh yes)

                  My hands and my feet are down  
                   And this is the way, I Jangaru x2

The respondent moves at the centre and shows the way by leading the other performers in the “Jingaru” dance. In such a singing game children exercise and keep fit.

In his study of the Yoruba oral literature, Akinyemi (2003:167) makes significant observations on children’s singing games.

While children are singing, they will continuously and vigorously swing their arms...the swinging of the arms itself is a form of physical exercise for the children involved in the game.

In many urban Luo and Luhya children’s singing games, the performers are actually involved in the singing and dancing and thus exercise their bodies, learn, entertain themselves and socialize.

Luo and Luhya children’s singing games also reveal much borrowing from other communities. This is more so in urban Luhya and Luo children’s singing games. In

“Tembea hivi nam nam” (walk like this, yes, yes) several languages are utilized in the performance.

The performance takes a circle formation. Children move around slowly forming a circle as they mimic and imitate the characters being mentioned in the performance. Such characters may include a cripple, a grandmother, a policeman among others.

The performance uses English and Swahili languages but other vernacular words from the Kikuyu language are used. The words, “Gacucu” and “Kaguka” come from the Kikuyu language. It is important to note that many Kenyan urban children have adopted the Kikuyu word “Gacucu” to mean grandmother. The Kikuyu word “Kaguka” means grandfather. The Luhya word for grandfather is similar to the Kikuyu one. The Luhya use “Kuka” for grandfather and the pronunciation differs from one Luhya dialect to another.

Use of various words from other communities in Luo and Luhya urban children’s singing games reveal how children don’t discriminate against other people. This is a characteristic of children’s innocence, lack of rigidity and their innocent world view. Indeed children of a certain age believe that the world is harmonious and coherent with everything falling in place according to sound moral law.

Use of different languages is prominent in Luo and Luhya urban children's singing games. In the singing game "Kama wanipenda" (if you love me), the performance is in Swahili but some English words are blended in.

This singing game is performed in a circle and consists of swaying of the waist and clapping of hands. The clapping of hands is heavily done as the word "love" is repeatedly mentioned. This is a form of syncopation as a style.

As the performers clap to the mention of the word "love", they stand at one spot, the soloist moves around in the inside of the circle looking for something to ask for, like socks, handkerchief and others. The child asked to give out something then becomes the respondent as he/she answers the soloist and picks up the role of the soloist. The soloist then gives way to the next one.

Though the singing game is performed in Swahili, English words are fused in:

Soloist: Kama wanipenda  
(If you love me)

All: Ii  
(Ii)

Soloist: Kama wanipenda  
(If you love me)

All: Ii  
(Ii)

Soloist: Kama wanipenda, penda, penda, penda  
(If you love, love, love, love me)

All:	Ii (Ii)
Soloist:	Nipe hizo (viatu, socks, kofia, skirt, blouse) (Give met that/those (shoes, socks, hat, skirt, blouse)
Respondent:	Mimi sikupendi (I don't love you)
All:	Ii (Ii)
Respondent:	Mimi sikupendi, pendi, pendi, pendi (I don't love, love, love, love you )
All:	Ii (Ii)

The soloist can ask for various things. This requires immediate response from the chosen respondent.

Such a children's singing game is crucial to the children's moral and social development. It also creates a sense of unity among children irrespective of their origins. Other variations of this singing game utilize a lot of English words. This depends on the creativity and the improvisation by the soloist.

Other Luo and Luhya children's singing games are based on a journey motif. The journey motif is significant in children's literature because it symbolizes the journey of growth from childhood to adulthood. The journey motif also, like fantasy, makes children travel in years and imagine being grown up human in an imaginative perspective.

The journey motif makes children move away from being dependent to independent children. It is thus central to the child's social and moral development.

In the urban children's singing game, "Twasafiri Mombasa" (We are traveling to Mombasa), children dramatize and tell the story of a father who is mean and cannot provide for his family. The game appears in a call and response form and is based on the cumulative effect of the things that are mentioned, thus creating rhythm and rhyme.

During the performance, the participants divide themselves into two groups of equal members. Each group makes a straight line formation. The performance has some variations. In some areas the two groups sit down in the field as they face each other and sing stamping the ground with their right palms. Questions are asked by the opposite group and answered by the other. Each time a question is asked, one participant hops from his/her side and joins the opposite group. When the question is answered to, another performer hops from the other group and joins the opposite one.

The singing game thus comprises of a continuous hopping of children from each group, depicting in a symbolic way the traveling movement. In other places, the two lines of participants hold each other's shoulders. They stand facing each other. Following the question phase of the performance, everyone moves to the opposite side and face each other. The performance consists of constant movements of the two sides. It is done in unison as every one participates.



This singing game requires much concentration as it follows well-established rules that have to be observed. The unison performance unites the participants and creates a sense of belonging. This singing game is popular not only with the Luo and Luhya children but many urban children in Kenya. It is also performed in many schools in Nairobi and other towns in Nyanza and Western Provinces.

Many urban children's singing games performed by Luo and Luhya children show the child's love of fantasy and also music. Many of these singing games put side by side things that may not be related. The aim of this style is to build the cumulative effect that creates harmony in the performance.

In the singing game, "Kama Race" (like a race) the performance is done in Swahili and English. The performers adopt a circle formation and the singing and dancing are vigorously done as children swing heads in an artistic way. As they dance, they move down slowly to a squatting position and then slowly rise up. This kind of dancing is evident of how children can borrow from other media and improvise in their performance. The dance style used in this singing game is mostly seen on Television and is popular with the youth. The dance style is mainly used in pop music and video clips that appear on television.

When a participant's name is called, he/she moves to the centre of the circle and does the unique dance style. The words "Dunda, dunda, dush!" can be translated as dance, dance. "Dunda" is a "sheng" word meaning dance:

Soloist:	Kama race, kama race x2 (Like a race, like a race x2)
all:	Na Wanjiku wa siku hizi (The Wanjiku of these days) Anaringaringa sana (Is too proud)
All:	Anatoa race kama race (Is moving like a race) Anatoa race kama race (Is moving like a race) Anadunda dunda dunda (She dances, dances, dances) Dunda dunda – dush! x2 (Dances dances dush! x2)

This singing game has a deeper meaning. It cautions children not to be proud and arrogant. The word “Dunda” apart from signifying dancing, implies arrogance. Hence Wanjiku is warned against this vice.

Other urban children’s singing games are pure limericks that are meant to entertain the performers. However, in this entertainment comes the unity and socialization of young children. Such singing games are performed for their musicality and joyfully danced to as young children enjoy the music and also certain memorable words used in the performance. Such a children’s singing game is “Chair, chair”. This is a very short verse that is repeatedly performed. It has a lot of repetition that creates the harmony and rhythm that children enjoy.

The singing game adopts the folk dance style. Children play with their legs and those of their partners. When they focus on the section, “Uu mii, sahu forget!” meaning, “Who?

Me? Forget!” they hold their waists with their left hands as they point at their partners with their fore-fingers. They then hold each others hands and dance round and round.

Some urban children’s singing games sung by Luhya and Luo children are indeed long and combine the use of various languages. Such singing games may tell a story or may just aim at entertaining the participants. For instance, in the singing game “Kijembe ni kikali” (The razor is sharp), the performance is long and is done in English and Swahili.

The singing game is performed by both boys and girls. The participants form pairs and hold their palms together. The singing game consists of tapping the opposite palm of the partner and clapping hands. This singing game is played very fast thus requiring concentration from the participants.

In the performance, children mention various values that are in line with their contemporary realities:

Masomo ni muhimu paramparam  
(Education is essential paramparam)

Baba yangu akaniambia paramparam  
(My father advised me paramparam)

Niendelea na masomo paramparam  
(I carry on with education paramparam)

Nikifikia university paramparam  
(When I reach university paramparam)

Nitacheza by short paramparam  
(I will play by short paramparam)

In the first stanza, the performers focus on the importance of education. They perform as they dance and dream about joining university. And after joining university they say that they can now be happy. In the singing game the phrase “Nitacheza by short”, implies being happy after acquiring university education. Here we note how children in their innocence appreciate the aspirations of society: education as the springboard for excellence in life.

The first stanza of the long singing game also emphasizes the significance of education. In this stanza the participants mention their mother as telling them not to joke with education.

The last stanza of the singing game is a nonsense stanza appended to the long singing game for entertainment purposes. In it various items that are unrelated are juxtaposed so as to create rhythm and rhyme.

Young children learn values and ways of behaviour from the people around them. They also get these values from books and other agents of socialization. Urban children’s singing games that are sung by Luo and Luhya children reveal that children are creative and indeed understand their immediate environment.

In the singing game “Boys and Girls”, Luo and Luhya children sing in Swahili and English as they perform and dramatize in pairs. This singing game adopts a reggae style kind of dancing. The participants dance in pairs:

Boys and girls  
Let me tell you something about this case and about that  
case  
Jana nilienda lakini sikumpata  
(Yesterday I went but I did not find her)  
I close my eyes  
(Oh figo figo)  
Oh figo figo  
(Everybody figo figo)  
everybody figo figo  
Mzungu alisema  
(The white man said)  
Kama unawako  
(If you have a partner)  
Mshike Kiunoni  
(Hold her at the waist)  
Twende chini kwa chini x3  
(Let's move together down, down x3)

In this singing game, Luo and Luhya children fuse nonsense words such as “figo” in the text of the performance so as to create rhythm and harmony in the performance. The singing game reveals the changing values that people copy from foreigners.

The participants perform as they hold their partners' waists and claim that this was said by the “white man”. This points at children's understanding of how certain values in their society originate from an outside source.

Earlier in chapter three we looked at how Luo and Luhya children's singing games done in vernacular reveal values to do with the traditional setups and requirements of their communities. However, the urban children's singing games tend to focus more on new values as seen in dance styles and even use of English and Swahili as the media of

communication. English is an official language in Kenya while Swahili is a national language.

In the urban and cosmopolitan settings children from many ethnic backgrounds intermingle and perform together. Luo and Luhya children, even when alone, do perform these singing games performed by children in towns and cosmopolitan schools.

Emphasis on education and its significance seems to dominate urban and cosmopolitan children's singing games. Luo and Luhya children, for instance, perform the singing game, "Bones Away – Aha! Aha!" This short verse is meant to teach the participants the alphabet. The nonsense words "dumbi, dumbi" cannot be translated and only add to the rhythm of the performance. The refrain, "Aha! Aha!" is part of the child's love of music and harmony.

The short verse is performed in a circle formation and involves various dance movements. The participants dance as they shake their waists. They touch their foreheads using right hands while the left hands touch the waists and keep on alternating as they vigorously shake their bodies. They tip toe as they perform making them look taller than they really are. This tip toe movement goes up and down rhythmically:

ABCD – That's the way  
I like it Aha! Aha!  
Bones away Aha! Aha! I like it Aha! Aha!  
Dumbi Dumbi Aha! Aha!  
Pressure pressure Aha! Aha!

Though a simple and short verse that is performed in characteristic dance formation and movement, it has a deeper message that seems to come from changing values in the child's society.

The verse emphasizes learning particularly the alphabet, which is significant in elementary schools. The phrase "Bones Away" however, seems to have been taken from a hit song sung by the Zairean Musician Samba Mapangala who lived in Kenya for many years. The hit song was entitled "Vunja mifupa" (literally translated as break the bones but meaning 'enjoy').

In the above children's singing game they borrow the words from the hit song that was sung in the 1980's but improvise on them by saying, "Bones Away". This interpretation is supported by their vigorous dancing that suggests that their bodies are not stiff or have "no bones". Thus within the same singing game, Luo and Luhya children emphasize the need for education, "ABCD – that's the way," at the same time showing great improvisation and imitation of their environment.

Luo and Luhya children's singing games exhibit great improvisation and creativity. In the urban singing games children improvise with names and other things within their environment. In the singing game "Mallow Revenger", Luo and Luhya children perform a rhythmic entertainment:

Mallow, mallow x2 mallow revenger  
(Mallow, mallow x2 mallow revenger)  
Sing so  
(Sing so)

Sasa so Mallow  
(Now so Mallow)  
Which colour do you want?  
(Which colour do you want?)  
And Julia kisasa  
(And fashionable Julia)  
Chubwi chubwi x2  
(Chibwi chubwi x2)

In this children's singing game, Luo and Luhya children form a circle and the performers hold hands. All the participants close their eyes except two, one of them being the soloist. The two move in between the circle while bending because they go under the held hands.

The climax of the performance is reached when the two suddenly stop close to one of the performers. One of the two slightly slaps the participant and the other pinches him/her at the same time. The two then pretend that nothing has happened. The slapped participant is supposed to identify exactly the one who pinched him/her and the one who lapped him/her.

This is quite a challenging performance. If the participant gets the right answer, he/she moves out of the circle and takes a position that will later form a group of winners. If the participant loses, he/she is separated from the circle and shown a different spot where he/she stands forming the group of losers.

At the end, all the winners form one group while the losers form another. The peak of the entertainment is reached when a sign is given to the winners who rush towards the losers



as if a real war has begun. They hold the losers' waists, swing them round and round and finally drop them on the ground. This marks the end of the singing game.

This singing game is more complex and tests children's wit, improves their imagination and enhances their socialization. At the end, both the losers and the winners remain happy and celebrate. The title "Mallow the Revenger" seems to have been borrowed by children from well known action stories. This shows how children can make use of other sources including the stories they read to make up their own performances.

Other Luo and Luhya urban children's singing games rely more on imitation. The introduction of the mobile phone seems to have fascinated many children. Luo and Luhya children perform a short singing game in which children imitate and mimic the act of making a call on the mobile phone. The performance is short and makes use of short sentences that appear in Swahili and English. The word "Alampakampakacha" is a nonsense word invented by the performers to add rhythm to the performance.

In this singing game the performers form a circle, but each child dances on the spot. The soloist directs the singing game by calling the names of the children and the child mentioned moves into the centre of the circle and demonstrates a creative dance style then moves back to the circle:

Napiga simu  
(I am phoning)

Hallo!  
(Hallo!)

Huko Mombasa  
(To Mombasa)

Naita Caroline  
(I am calling Caroline)

Aje tucheze  
(To come and dance)

Alampakampakacha  
(Alampakampakacha)

Sindere Sindere x2  
(Sindere Sindere x2)

Though Luo and Luhya children imitate their immediate environment and particularly the actions of adults, it is clear from the above performance that they discard adults' rules and regulations. In this performance, they improvise to include nonsense words for aesthetic function and their own entertainment. The mention of Mombasa is significant since the singing game was collected in Nairobi. This shows how children want to identify with those in other towns. If the same singing game is performed in Mombasa, the performers may mention other towns in Kenya.

In other Luo and Luhya urban children's singing games children put together various items in a performance that is meant to entertain and test their wit and creativity. For instance, in the singing game, "Sabina, Sabina", the performers play in pairs and rhythm is created by the tapping of hands.

The performers make three formations of hand tapping style. First the game begins by the tapping of the hands of the partner at the middle. Then each performer claps their

hands and raises them up to a higher position. The third formation is played with the back of the palm. This exercise is done as quickly as possible and the players are expected to respond promptly. Errors are not allowed. The child who makes many mistakes becomes the loser but he/she is not eliminated from the singing game but expected to practice more and learn:

Sabina, Sabina  
(Sabina Sabina)

Nampenda Sabina  
(I love Sabina)

Na mtoto analia ing'ee, ing'ee  
(And the baby is crying ing'ee ing'ee)

Kadenge na mpira  
(Kadenge with the ball)

Sili goo  
(I don't eat goo)

Ae Mama  
(Oh Mum)

Sili bigiji  
(I don't eat Big G)

Nataka Mbolgam  
(I want ball gum)

Kibiriti uncle, uncle  
(Matchbox Uncle, Uncle)

When I go to Nairobi  
(When I go to Nairobi)

Other day cati, cati, kibiriti  
(Other day shirt, shirt Match box)

Mzee kipara tumpeleke Nyumbani  
(We take the bald-headed old man home)

Akicheza tumchape matakoo  
(If he brings problems we beat him at the buttocks)

This is an interesting children's singing game that brings in association various items that seem unrelated. This reveals the child's fascination with both the physical and the social worlds. The performers imitate the crying of a baby, "ing'ee, ing'ee" and move on to mention many things such as ball gum, big G, match box and the bald headed man.

The mention of the bald-headed man shows how children may be fascinated with the bald-headed people. They wonder at this phenomenon which they seem not to understand. This should be understood in the child's innocence, limited experience and also world view.

The last line of the singing game points at the children's understanding of their society. Children know that those who cause trouble are supposed to be "disciplined" through being caned on the buttocks. This view is basically taken from the child's school experience.

The participants also mention the once famous Kenyan footballer, Joe Kadenge. This allusion to the great sportsman reveals that children's singing games have different sources and may creatively recreate these sources for their own entertainment and socialization.

Call and response as a stylistic device is quite common in Luo and Luhya children's singing games, both in the traditional ones and also the urban ones. The singing game, "Mama Njeri" (Njeri's mother) is such a singing game:

Mama Njeri Yoo!  
(Mother of Njeri Yes!)

Waenda wapi?  
(Where are you going?)

Sokoni  
(To the market)

Kununua nini?  
(To buy what?)

Samaki  
(Some fish)

Samaki gani?  
(What type of Fish?)

Omena  
(Dagger)  
Haya kwaheri  
(Okay bye)

Salimia watoto  
(Greet your children)

Nasikia Bwana yako aliumwa na nyoka  
(I heard that your husband was bitten by a snake)

Auuui!  
(Auuui!)

Nifanye nini na sina mwingine  
(What shall I do yet I do not have another one)

Wa kunisaidia?  
(To help me?)

Sijampata kuku sijampata  
(I did not get the chicken, I did not)

One, two, three... ten.  
(One, two, three... ten)

This performance imitates what adults do in life. Children talk about a mother going to buy fish from the market. They surprise the mother by revealing to her that the husband was bitten by a snake. This leads to the peak of the performance as the performers start mourning. However, the ending brings in the idea of counting and also chicken. These are unrelated things and only add to the child's entertainment.

It is interesting how young children create rhymes and verses that they dramatize. This creativity borrows from many sources. For instance, the above singing game is similar to the Luo traditional children's singing game, "Dani korirego" (Grandmother you are grinding). The only difference is the role given to the two women in the two singing games. In the Luo traditional vernacular performance, Luo children talk about a grandmother grinding and they inform her that a crocodile had bitten her husband. The lament in the two versions is the same: the woman regrets losing her sole breadwinner.

Because of the introduction of Christianity in many African societies, children are trained in Sunday schools to understand different biblical stories and also grow up understanding that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Many of the Sunday school stories are taken from the life of leading figures in religious books. Such figures include Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ and others from the bible and Mohammend from the Quran.

Urban children improvise these religious stories and fuse them into their singing games. Luo and Luhya children indeed perform many singing games that have been adapted from biblical stories. These singing games show the child's understanding of the religious stories taught in church through the Sunday school lessons.

The singing game "Father Abraham" is a classic example:

Father Abraham, had many sons  
Many sons, sons Father Abraham  
And I am one of them and so are you  
So let us praise the Lord  
With your right foot, left foot

Right hand, left hand  
Shake your head  
Turn around  
Sit down

This is a group performance in which children reveal their knowledge of biblical stories. The story of Abraham appears in the Old Testament. Though the story itself does not say that Abraham had many sons, Christians believe that they are descendants of Abraham. From a child's point of view, this story is optimistic and reassuring. It gives them a sense of pride to feel that they are descendants of Abraham.

Their innocence and level of psychological and moral development does not allow them to rationally enquire into the relevance of the story, but it is significant that they hold the views that adults have inculcated in them.

Children do follow what adults tell them, they also copy and imitate adult behaviour. Religious singing games that the Luo and Luhya children perform are significant in the spiritual development of the child. The singing game, “Baby Jesus” shows the Christian view of the role of Jesus Christ in their lives:

Baby Jesus, Baby Jesus  
 I love you, I love you  
 You are my saviour, you are my saviour  
 Everyday, everyday, everyday.

Many other urban children’s singing games that are performed by Luo and Luhya children seem to borrow from well known narratives that children are told by adults. This is the case in the singing game “Sungura” (hare):

Sungura, sungura	Hare, hare
mjanja we x2	You are clever x2
Ingawa mdogo	Even though small
Kashinda wakubwa	You beat the big ones
Ulipata wapi akili zako?	Where did you get your brains?

In this singing game children borrow from the trickster narratives that are told to them. The “Hare” is the main Trickster character in the East African Trickster stories. These stories are told to children mainly to entertain them and also to make them learn that it is possible to succeed both emotionally and physically even at their tender age. The narratives also teach them about the existence of con people in society.

Luo and Luhya children and other urban children perform the singing game of “The Hare” and comment on the hare’s cunning and cleverness. They wonder at the hare’s small size yet it possesses the ability to bring down big animals like elephant and hippopotamus.



Many other urban children's singing games that are performed by Luo and Luhya children are taken directly from European nursery rhymes and games. These games show how children borrow from various sources and also learn as they perform rhymes and games from other cultures. Such directly borrowed singing games include the English "Row, row, row your boat!" and the verse "Twinkle, Twinkle little star"

The borrowed singing games are directly transmitted from generation to generation and are therefore manifestations of the history of the child's society. It is important, however, to note that in some cases the borrowing is not taken directly as the performers improvise to make the borrowed versions more relevant to their environment.

The dance formation and movements that accompany these performances are invented by children themselves in line with their aims of the performance. Many of the formations used are those that children take up from other children and improvise on them.

The urban singing games that are performed by Luo and Luhya children reveal the child's keen observation of the changing trends in their society. Through use of vivid imagination, Luo and Luhya children dramatize various values that reflect how children's literature, like the mainstream literature, keeps in line with the changing society.

Urban trends such as use of modern technology, English and Swahili as the main media of communication are creatively fused into children's singing games. Most of the dance formations that are used also reflect the child's imitation of Television values and

advertisement trends. This is true as seen in how Luo and Luhya children perform and dance to reggae styles in their singing games. Thus many of these singing games reflect the aesthetics and trends of a changing society and the transition from a strictly traditional set-up to a more cosmopolitan and heterogeneous setting.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary and Conclusions**

Luo and Luhya children's singing games reflect the macro-culture of the two communities. In their own free time, Luo and Luhya children imitate their immediate surroundings and also the cultural aesthetics of their communities. This reflection is done both in the text and the dance formations and movements that the participants adopt.

Our findings reveal that the two communities, being neighbouring communities, share a lot in terms of cultural aesthetics. The performances by children from these two communities are indeed artistic repertoires that are typical representations of the Luo and Luhya indigenous culture and also the changing trends in the two societies and Kenya as a whole.

These singing games reflect children's creativity, their attempt at understanding the world around them and also their wonder and anxieties. Children's singing games cannot therefore be ignored as a major contributor to the development of the child. The singing games contribute to the moral and social development of the participants.

The educational significance of Luo and Luhya children's singing games cannot therefore be overlooked. As children perform and dramatize in their own games, they socialize,

learn and also understand the macro-culture of their settings. Many of the themes found in Luo and Luhya children's singing games reflect the cultural aesthetics of the two communities. The symbols, the images and even the dance movements and formations are part and parcel of the cultural dynamics of the two communities.

Some researchers posit the view that many children's singing games do not do what they purport to do, particularly in elementary schools. That children lose sight of the objective, view the singing games as fun and do not learn anything by performing them. Such scholars further argue that the heavy emphasis often placed on winning may mislead the participants as to the real objective of learning (Ferne, 1988).

However, given the nature of Luo and Luhya children's singing games and particularly the way the singing games are dramatized and performed, these arguments do not hold water. Luo and Luhya children's singing games are performed in a cooperative manner which does not place much emphasis on the winner or loser. Many of the singing games are based on testing the participants' wit, making them learn more about the environment or entertain them as they socialize in groups.

Luo and Luhya children's singing games communicate communal identity as the participants engage in make-believe and role-play adults, animals, birds and even imaginary beings like ogres. These games create an interesting learning environment. They create an atmosphere in which children learn by doing and experiencing their actions. The singing games also allow Luo and Luhya children to work at various levels

of abilities, create an atmosphere of working together to acquire communication skills, develop thinking patterns and provide knowledge from collective experience. This is because Luo and Luhya children's singing games involve the participants and thus capture their attention as they vigorously act and imitate their immediate physical and social environments.

Indeed as observed in the field, the participants focus their attention on the singing game and concentrate on what is being done. Even in the performance of nonsense singing games the focus is more on the dance movements and formations. Such games bring the participants together and make them identify with their cultural aesthetics in a more child-like vision. Their innocence and view of life form part of the wider performance.

Most singing games require that all the participants perform the movement patterns and sing the game songs in unison. This unison performance is common in both the Luo and Luhya children's singing games. Many group performances include both boys and girls and the unison singing takes a chorus or refrain pattern. It is important that each participant keeps up with the rhythm.

Performance styles such as syncopation add to the rhythm and harmony of the singing games as children show emotions and excitement associated with the singing game. Many Luo and Luhya children's singing games rely more on rhythm and syncopation. These two performance features enhance the communication and message of the performance.

Luo and Luhya children's singing games socialize children into the cultural patterns and aesthetics of their respective communities. As observed in our analysis of the singing games, roles are clearly identified with different genders, especially in the traditional vernacular singing games. Young girls are socialized into the roles of womanhood as they imitate what their mothers and grandmothers do.

In many of the collected singing games girls perform the roles they take up from their older sisters, mothers and also sing about their grandmothers. Thus in the Luhya children's singing game, "Khweya" (sweeping) the performers imitate the role performed by their mother and grandmother:

Khweya khweya  
(Sweeping, sweeping)

Khweya khweya nyumba  
(Sweeping, sweeping the house)

Mayi niye, weya  
(My mother is the one, who sweeps)

Kamanya khweya nyumba  
(She knows, to sweep the house)

Kukhu niye, weya  
(My grandmother is the one, who knows)

Kamanya, khweya nyumba  
(She knows, to sweep the house)

Khukweyeresya, weya  
(Good sweeping, one sweeps)

Inyuma nende akachi mwo khutekha.  
(Behind and around the cooking place)

Besides being an important resource for developing children's learning skills and group identification, children's singing games play a significant role in transmitting a society's culture to children. Gender roles are a significant part of this culture.

In many Luo and Luhya children's singing games gender roles are subtly communicated as children innocently dramatize and entertain themselves. In the Luo children's singing game, "Dana korirego?" (Grandmother, you are grinding?) Children associate the grinding of grain with their grandmother.

This is a reflection of their observation of the environment or just what they have inherited from the earlier generation of children:

Dana korirego?  
(My grandmother are you grinding?)

Eeh korarego  
(Yes, I am grinding)

Iregu kuon ga ng'o wa?  
(You are grinding ugali and what?)

Aregu kuon gi mbuta  
(I am grinding ugali and Nile Perch)

Ng'ama no mi-i?  
(Who gave you?)

Wuon pacho  
(The man of the homestead (my husband))

Wuon pacho mana winjo  
(The one whom I heard that the)

Ni nyang' omako cha?  
(Crocodile got hold of?)

Iwacho adier?  
(Are you telling the truth?)

Awacho adier  
(Yes, I am telling the truth)

Iwacho adier?  
(Are you telling the truth?)

Uwi-i chuora, aaah uwi-i chuora  
(Uwi my husband, aaa uwi my husband)

Chuora ma wuon pacho  
(My husband who is the head of the home)

Ema nyang omako, ehe  
(Is the one that the crocodile got hold of, ehe.)

This singing game may socialize children in different ways particularly when it comes to gender roles. The man in this singing game is viewed as the sole breadwinner of the family while the woman is associated with domestic chores such as cooking.

This performance of gender roles can be insidious in that it can quietly condition boys and girls to accept the way they “imitate” the world, thus reinforcing gender images. This reinforcement may make children not to question existing social relationships.

However it is important to note that such beliefs may change as children grow up and get more exposed. What is important is that the singing game reveals more about the child’s environment. One of the dynamics of Luo and Luhya children’s singing games is the performance style which encourages group participation, cohesiveness and solidarity in a



variety of ways. The rules, the physical formations and movements reinforce teamwork attitudes in the singing games.

Rules, such as circular formations and interaction patterns, force the participants to unite in the performance and thus appreciate each other in the cooperative game. In such children's singing games as "Marobo" Luo and Luhya children play and learn to support or sanction each other's behaviour. If one of the participants falters or does not abide by the rules, the other participants will show their disappointment in the behaviour through negative responses such as keeping quiet, or tapping the head of the participant. As Wharton-Boyd (1983:53) has correctly observed:

...during the play of the singing games the children learn the meaning of cooperative play; they also learn that others have feelings, desires and wants like their own. Control and sublimation of such feelings as fear, anger, affection and joy, emotions which influence social behaviour, are also expressed....

Luo and Luhya children's singing games reveal different emotions associated with children and also show children's reactions to different situations. Young children imitate their environment and thus contribute to the awareness of the game. They also learn to accept each other.

Children are part and parcel of the society's aesthetics, aspirations and struggle with their environment. Many of the singing games reveal the role of the adult in inculcating certain values in children. Many Luo and Luhya children's singing games that talk about

the importance of formal education seem to have been taken directly from adults' teachings.

This is not unique as children learn from their surroundings and in most cases they internalize what they get from their teachers, parents and culture in general. Thus most children's singing games that talk about the value of formal education and the need for people to get "certificates" are taken directly from adults' teachings.

In such teachings, adults emphasize what they consider important for the social and moral development of the child. In this respect teachers play a significant role. As observed in Luo and Luhya children's singing games especially during the live performances, children imitate the adult world in a creative way. They mimic, dramatize and even retell the values and concerns of their macro-societies.

Luo and Luhya children's singing games are significant repertoires of the macro-culture of the Luo and Luhya communities. This genre of children's literature cannot be ignored. It is a reflection of a people's values, aspirations and their immediate environment. The genre is also a witness to the fact that children are creative in their own ways and also active members of their societies.

The singing games are significant to the children's social and moral development and also internalization of societal values. They encourage children to make effective use of their memory as children master movement patterns and proper word sequences.

In addition to memory skills, many Luo and Luhya children's singing games require the participants to think on an associational basis as is the case in many nonsense singing games such as "Marobo". Such games encourage more creativity as a variety of ideas, responses or movement styles can be improvised.

Children's singing games are also significant in children's self-expression. As they dramatize various issues about their society's aesthetics, children learn how to express themselves as individuals. This is what Wharton-Boyd (1983: 53) emphasizes:

The idea of self-expression is punctuated in the games by the importance placed on the players to perform well – that is improvised dance movements and song patterns. Supported by the players in the game, children are allowed to "do their thing" within the confines of the group and game rules.

Many Luo and Luhya children's singing games call for spontaneous verbal and non-verbal displays. The children's singing games that are performed in groups emphasize children's self expression as the participants express themselves freely but within the performing parameters of the singing games.

What is clear from this study is that Luo and Luhya children's singing games are part and parcel of the macro-cultures of the two communities. Being neighbouring communities, their children's singing games share a lot in terms of thematic concerns, performance styles and even the texts of the singing games.

This genre of children's literature becomes crucial in understanding the cultural aesthetics of the Luo and Luhya people of Kenya. We have also noted that the traditional forms of Luo and Luhya children's singing games are undergoing various changes. This is as a result of formal education, Christianity and other changing trends in the two societies, and indeed in many African countries.

Luo and Luhya children are today part of the wider changing society and their performances of children's singing games reveal this. Children borrow styles and texts from different sources including electronic media, the church, urban styles among others.

Children's singing games remain significant creative works that reflect a society's aesthetics and also changing trends. Children's literature, like the mainstream literature, keeps in line with societal changes.

Luo and Luhya children imitate and dramatize aesthetics of their changing societies but from a child's point of view. In their performances and role-plays, children imitate the adult world but discard the rules created by adults. They create their own rules and innocently follow them from a child-like vision. This vision is important in their moral and social development. The optimism in their world view is also reflected in their performances that always end up happily. This optimism and perspective of the world is both safe and reassuring to the child.

## **5.2 Recommendations for Further Studies**

This study focused on the Luo and Luhya of the western region of Kenya. It was limited to these two communities representing the Nilotes and the Bantus respectively. The method adopted in the field work was that of close observation and participation in children's singing games.

Children's singing games form a significant sub-genre of children's literature. There is need for more researchers to delve deeper into this repertoire of children's creativity not only to discover how the singing games reflect a people's values in a creative way but also to study them as agents of the child's socialization within a particular culture.

Kenya has over forty (40) communities, and it is true that all these communities have children's singing games performed by their children. Future researchers can carry out a broader comparative study from various communities. Such a study may aim at analyzing common elements or literary devices in the collected texts.

The movement from rural areas to urban areas has created a significantly unique form of children's singing games in the urban centres. These emerging category of children's creativity transcends the traditional or indigenous cultures of many communities and reflects how children are part of the changing societies.

Researchers need to treat the urban children's singing games as a form of creativity that results from the child's keen observation of the environment, the child's vivid

imagination and the child's creative communication. It is important to discover how children improvise, borrow from known sources and even recreate the old versions of known rhymes such as nursery rhymes and Sunday school rhymes.

More significant is for the future researchers to examine how Luo and Luhya children's singing games in general can be applied and researched in an educational setting.

In this aspect we agree with Wharton-Boyd (1983:48) in the suggestion that children's singing games can be applied and researched in five main areas: curriculum content and philosophy, teaching strategies, child assessment, development of character, and development of self-expression.

Children are comfortable in a communication setting with which they are most familiar. They master the language of their environment which becomes functional for them to communicate their thoughts, ideas and feelings.

In this respect one can hypothesize that teaching strategies should be based upon the child's existing communication style. Researchers need to examine the significance of the teaching strategies adopted in relation to the child's communication style and also the wider environment. It is true that Luo and Luhya children's singing games provide materials that educators can use in developing pedagogical strategies that reflect the children's existing communication framework. By using this framework the child's communicative repertoire is expanded.

There is also need to examine how children's singing games can provide information to educators about the child concern. This brings in the question of the child's socialization within a particular culture. As revealed in our analysis of Luo and Luhya children's singing games, children's singing games may serve as a means for the teacher to learn more about the child and his/her cultural environment.

Children's singing games may also be handy in character development. As teachers seek to inculcate into children specific values, skills and techniques and also develop their character traits that prepare them for their participation in society, singing games may be of value. This is because children's singing games encourage cohesiveness and solidarity in a variety of ways.

Children's singing games thus offer a wide area of research that future researchers can delve into. What is important is to recognize children as creative people and place their creative outputs within the broader creative works of man. These creative works reflect a people's values from different angles and perspectives, and how the values are not static but keep on changing with time.

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## APPENDIX I

### LUHYA CHILDREN'S SINGING GAMES

#### 1. Olukaka Iwatinya

#### The Fence is strong and secure

Solo: Bana befwe khwebelanga

My brothers and sisters what type of wood do  
you

omusala si?x2

Use for making our fence? x2

All: Khwebelanga omusangula

We use omusangula

Solo: Olukaka Iwatinya?

Is the fence strong and secure?

All: Lwatinya

Yes, it is

Solo: Khandi Iwatinya

Is it strong and secure?

All: Lwatinya

Yes, it is

Solo: Nenonde hena?

Where do I follow?

All: Eee!

Eee!

Solo: Kakaka

Tight

All: Nguoyoo.

There he goes.

#### 2. Saa salinganga

#### Saa Salinganga

Solo: Saa salinganga

Solo: Saa salinganga

All: Saa salinganga

All: Saa salinganga

Solo: Saa salinganga

Solo: Saa salinganga

All: Saa salinganga

All: Saa salinganga

Solo: Awinja hamba omulina

Solo: Awinja choose a friend

All: Manase mambe owanje saa

All: And I will also choose mine

Solo: Saa salinganga

Solo: saa salinganga

### 3. Ndilendi lewa

### Ndilendi Lewa

Solo: Ndilendi lewa

Solo: Ndilendi lewa

All: Andilewa

All: Andilewa

Solo: Ee hamba omulina

Solo: Ee Selina get a friend

All: Manase mambe owanje aa ndilewa

All: And I will also get one aa ndilendi

### 4. Amabele

### Milk

Solo: Amabele

Solo: Milk

All: Kalimung'ombe

All: It is in the cow

Solo: Amabele

Solo: Milk

All: Kalimung'ombe ya papa kali mung'ombe

All: It is in father's cow, it is the cow

Solo: Amabele

Solo: Milk

All: Kalimung'ombe

All: It is in the cow

Solo: Amabele

Solo: Milk

All: Kalimung'ombe ya khotsa kali mung'ombe

All: It is in uncle's cow, it is in the cow

Solo: Amabele

Solo: Milk

All: Kalimung'ombe ya kuka  
kalimung'ombe.

All: It is in the grandfather's cow, it is.  
in the cow

## 5. Ndalia Obubwe

Solo: Ndalia obubwe

All: Obwobule

Solo: Nende akhanyama

All: Obwobule

Solo: Otenyo sinjili

All: Obwobule

Solo: Orenge amabeka

All: Obwobule

Solo: Kalukha wakhale

All: Obwobule

Solo: Awuwi!

All: Chachacha

## I Ate his Bread

Solo: I ate his bread

All: His sorghum bread

Solo: I ate it with tasty meat

All: His sorghum bread

Solo: Stand up Otenyo

All: His sorghum bread

Solo: Shake your shoulders

All: His sorghum bread

Solo: Go back to your place and sit down

All: His sorghum bread

Solo: Awuwi!

All: Cha cha cha

## 6. Khwatsiye

Solo: Khwatsiye Khwiliba khwanyole  
Abakhana basiana ebilenje

All: Khwatsiye Khwiliba khwanyola  
abakhana basiana abilenje

Solo: Ebilenje kolokha abilenje kolokha  
ebilenje kolokha x3

All: Ebilenje kolokha ebilenje kolokha x3  
ebilenje kolokha x3

## We went

Solo: We went to Khwiliba and found girls  
there with jigger-infested feet

All: We went to Khwiliba and found girls  
there with jigger infested feet

Solo: Feet straighten out x3

All: Feet straighten out x3

## **7. Koloti**

Solo: Mama yalingi omulongi wetsindabu x2

All: Koloti x2

Solo: Khulonde yaa

All: Koloti

Solo: Khutsire yaa

All: Koloti.

## **Zig zag**

Solo: My mother was a potter x2

All: Zig-zag x2

Solo: Let us take this route

All: Zig-zag

Solo: Go through here

All: Zig-zag.

## **8. Onyando Nakhebi**

Onyando yabukula

Ingokho yabene

Nakhwesa eliyayi

Halala neimondo

Natsibolela mukamba nolachile

Onyando nakhang'ang'a

Siamba abasikari

Bafumile Onyando.

## **Onyando the Little Thief**

Onyando stole

Someone's chicken

And pulled out an egg

And the gizzard

He said to it, "tomorrow you will be a meal"

Onyando is wicked

I wish I had police

To arrest Onyando.

## **9. Mama mbe tsimindi**

Mama mbe tsimindi nzie khumitsa x2

Nzie nzie nzie nzie khumitsa x2

## **Mother Give me Cowpeas**

Mother give me cowpeas seeds I go  
and sow x2

I go I go I go I go and sow x2

Silauma esirietso, khana inzala yakhuwira

If there wasn't "esirietso", we would  
have died of hunger

Nonyoye akhanyama osetsanga nokonga

When you have meat, you grind with  
pride

Nzie nzie nzie nzie okhumitsa

I go I go I go I go and sow.

Mama mbe amakanda nzie okhumitsa x2

Mother give me bean seeds I go and  
sow x2

Nzie nzie nzie nzie okhumitsa x2

I go I go I go I go and sow.

Silauma esirietso, khane inzala

If there wasn't "estirietso", we

yakhwira

would have died of hunger

Nonyoye akhanyama osetsanga nokonga

When you have meat, you grind with  
pride

Nzie nzie nzie nzie okhumitsa

I go I go I go I go and sow.

Mama mbe amatuma nzie okhumitsa x2

Mother give me maize seeds I go and  
sow x2

Nzie nzie nzie nzie okhumitsa x2

I go I go I go I go and sow. x2

Silauma esirietso khana inzala yakhuwira

If there wasn't "esirietso", we would  
have died of hunger

Nonyoye akhanyama osetsanga nokonga

When you have meat, you grind with  
pride

Nzie nzie nzie nzie okhumitsa.

I go I go I go I go and sow.

### **10. Indangu Wosimbo**

Ndatsie indangu Wosimbo

Ninyola elini likhaye

Ndabolla Osimbo, Osimbo

Ngamila indabusi Nyandele

Naye niyangalusia Nyandele

Siolola olusimbi mwikosi

Efwananga iruka Nyandele

Oiye nyandele esialo siakhuramba

Pinyi koro otamowa

Omusiele Kalandini

Ndetsa hamuliango uwo

Ninyola ohenganga nosula okhwikula

Omulianga

Oparanga ndia hena? Ndia muiwe.

### **Osimbo's Backyard**

I went to Osimbo's backyard

I found a black mamba seated

I asked Osimbo, Osimbo

Get me a club Nyandele

She replied, Nyandele

Can't you see cowrie shells round its neck

It seems to be a tamed one

Oh Nyandele the world is complex

The world is complex

Old lady Kalandini

I came to your door

I found you awake and you refused to open  
the door

Where do you think I will eat? I will eat at  
your place

## 11. Katimbe

Kati-Katimbe Kati-Katimbe

Okhulima khuwamatuma

Kati-Katimbe x2

Okhulima khwamakanda

Kati-Katimbe x2

Okhulima khwamapwoni

Kati-Katimbe x2

Okhulima khwobule

Kati-Katimbe x2

## Katimbe

“Kati-Katimbe Kati-Katimbe”

Growing of maize

“Kat-Katimbe” x2

Growing of beans

“Kati-Katimbe” x2

Growing of potatoes

“Kati-Katimbe” x2

Growing of sorghum

“Kati-Katimbe” x2

## 12. Kukhu

Kukhu kukhu kukhu nomukhaye x2

Kukhu yebula abandu, kukhu

nomukhaye x2

Kukhu kukhu kukhu asilimwoyo x2

Kukhu yebula abandu, kukhu

asilimwoyo x2

## Grandmother

Grandmother grandmother grandmother is a lady x2

Grandmother had many children, grandmother is a lady x2

Grandmother grandmother grandmother is still alive x2

Grandmother had many children, grandmother is still alive x2



### 13. Ong'ado

Solo: Ong'ado mwene tsinyende  
tsiamumala

All: Onga'do mwene tsinyende  
tsiamumala

Solo: Lelo bulano yeyakilanga esisokoro

All: Lelo bulano yeyakilanga esisokoro

Solo: Ong'ado mwene obukhwakhwa  
bwamumala

All: Ong'ado mwene obukhwakhwa  
bwamumala

Solo: Lelo bulano yeyakilanga esisokoro

All: Lelo bulano yeyakilanga esisokoro

### Ong'ado

Solo: Ong'ado has a lot of jiggers

All: Ong'ado has a lot of jiggers

Solo: Nowadays he uses a maize cob to  
scratch himself

All: Nowadays he uses a maize cob to  
scratch himself

Solo: Ong'ado's body is full of scabies

All: Ong'ado's body is full of scabies

Solo: Nowadays he uses a maize cob to  
scratch himself

All: Nowadays he uses a maize cob to  
scratch himself

### 14. Papa Uwo Niye Wina?

Solo: Papa uwo niye wina?

All: Niye Tonde

Solo: Ne Tonde?

All: Tonde Amang'ule

### Who is Your Father?

Solo: Who is your father

All: Tonde

Solo: Whose Tonde?

All: Tonde Amang'ule

Solo: Ne Amang'ule?

All: Amang'ule Ngwekwe

Solo: Ne Ngwekwe?

All: Ngwekwe Abayanza

Solo: Ne Abayanza?

All: Abayanza Abakabo

Solo: Ne Abakabo?

All: Abakabo Minga

Solo: Ne Minga?

All: Minga Nzenze

Solo: Ne Nzenze?

All: Nzenze Mumbo

Solo: Ne Mumbo?

All: Mumbo Khabili

Solo: Whose Amang'ule?

All: Amang'ule Ngwekwe

Solo: Whose Ngwekwe?

All: Ngwekwe son of Abayanza

Solo: Whose Abayanza?

All: Abayanza son of Abakoko

Solo: Whose Abakoko?

All: Abakoko son of Minga?

Solo: Whose Minga?

All: Minga son of Mumbo

Solo: Whose Nzenze?

All: Nzenze son of Mumbo

Solo: Whose Mumbo?

All: Mumbo son of Khabili

### 15. Lekha Omupila

Solo: Omwana ndakhukaya olekhe  
omupila

All: Omwana ndakhukaya olekhe  
omupila

Solo: Omupila ikwo kulikhwira

All: Omupila ikwo kulikhwira

Solo: Eee eee eee eee

### Stop Playing Football

Solo: Child I have warned you to stop  
playing football

All: Child I have warned you to stop  
playing football

Solo: That ball will kill you

All: That ball will kill you

Solo: Eee eee eee eee

All: Eee eee eee eee

Solo: Maa maa maa maa

All: Maa maa maa maa

Solo: Ooo ooo ooo

All: Ooo ooo ooo

All: Eee eee eee eee

Solo: Maa maa maa maa

All: Maa maa maa maa

Solo: Ooo ooo ooo

All: Ooo ooo ooo

## 16. Omwicha Wefwe

Solo: Oh, kwinya omwicha wefwe x3

Omwene mwene oyoo.

All: Omwicha wengwe ni nani x3

Omwene mwene oyoo

Solo: Omwicha wefwe ni Fei x3

Omwene mwene oyoo

All: Niwina acha okhumlela x3

Omwene mwene oyoo

Solo: Mercy acha okhumlela x3

Omwicha mwene oyoo

All: Mnakhwa engombe chinga x3

Omwicha mwene oyoo

Solo: Khunakwa engombe ekhumi x3

Omwicha mwene oyoo

All: Mnakhwa esende chinga x3

Omwene mwene oyoo

## Our Friend

We want our friend x3

That friend

Who is your friend x3

That friend

Our friend is Fei x3

That friend

Who will come for her x3

That friend

Mercy will come for her x3

That friend

How many cows shall you pay x3

That friend

We want ten cows x3

That friend

How much money shall you pay x3

That friend

### **17. Omwana wa Mama**

Solo: Omwana wa mama apepetanga

All: Omwana wa mama apepetanga

Solo: Aiee!

All: Aee aee aeee

Solo: Aee!

All: Aiee aiee aieeee

### **18. Olukaka Lwoma**

Solo: Abana befwe abana befwe

Mdeheranga luhuyi sina?

All: Hudeheranga omusalangula

Solo: Lwoma?

All: Nonde hena?

Solo: Eee!

All: Ka kaka

Solo: Nguyoo!

### **19. Obule Bwanje**

Solo: Obule bwanje

All: Obule

Solo: Joani sinjira

### **My Mother's Child**

Solo: My mother's child is a fine footballer

All: My mother's child is a good  
footballer

Solo: Aiee!

All: Aee aee aeee

Solo: Aee!

All: Aiee aiee aieeee

### **The Fence is Strong**

Solo: My brothers and sisters what type of  
wood

Do we use for making our fence?

All: We use "Omusangula"

Solo: Is the fence strong and secure?

All: Where do I follow?

Solo: Eee!

All: Tight, tight

Solo: There he goes!

### **My Millet**

Solo: My millet

All: Millet

Solo: Joan stand up

All: Sinjira

Solo: Okhinie mabeka

All: Mabeka

Solo: Okhinie lipala

All: Lipala

Solo: Okhinie kudundu

All: Kudundu

All: Stand up

Solo: Shake your shoulders

All: Shoulders

Solo: Dance lipala

All: Lipala

Solo: Dance kudundu

All: Kudundu

## 20. Mbe Ovule

Solo: Mbe ovule vwange

All: Ovule

Solo: Mbe ovule vwange

All: Ovule

Solo: Muhonja mulahi

All: Ovule

Solo: Singila usuve

All: Ovule

Solo: Sieva kulole

All: Ovule

Solo: Vina amavega

All: Ovule

Solo: Yilana yikala

All: Ovule

## Finger Millet

Solo: Give me my finger millet

All: Finger millet

Solo: Give me my finger millet

All: Finger millet

Solo: Dear Muhonja

All: Finger millet

Solo: Stand and dance

All: Finger millet

Solo: Dance for us

All: Finger millet

Solo: Shake your shoulders

All: Finger millet

Solo: Go back and sit

All: Finger millet

Solo: Vosi singili

Solo: All to stand

## **21. Likudu**

Solo: Likudu lilambaya

All: Yee lilambaya

Solo: Likudu lilambaya

All: Yee lilambaya

Solo: Lilambayanga nilienya kina?

All: Lilambayanga nilienya obwabo

## **Tortoise**

Solo: Tortoise is crawling

All: Yes, its crawling

Solo: Tortoise is crawling

All: Yes, its crawling

Solo: Crawling, looking for what?

All: Crawling, looking for mushrooms

## **22. Ndiegu**

Ndiegu yatsia kusuma

Akima umwana nalia yenyene

Umwana yatsia kusuma

Akima ndiegu nalia yenyena

Ndiegu vava?

Ukalilanga guu?

Tsunu, Tsunu, Tsunu, Tsunu!

## **Ndiegu**

Ndiegu looked for food

He denied the child and ate alone

The child looked for food

He denied ndiegu and ate alone

Ndiegu why?

Why are you crying?

Pinch, pinch, pinch, pinch

### 23. Ndolindo

### Ndolindo

Solo: Ndoli ndo  
All: Ndogodo! } *Sound made by an ogre*

Solo: Ndoli ndo

All: Ndogodo!

Solo: Henzi gunaniyigu!

Solo: Look at this ogre

All: Ndogodo

All: Ndogodo!

Solo: Gwamalavene

Solo: He has killed the owner

All: Ndogodo!

All: Ndogodo!

Solo: Golenya kumbugula

Solo: He wants to take me

All: Ndogodo!

All: Ndogodo!

Solo: Nikihambee

Solo: It's a tag of war

All: Chahamba

All: It's on

L'ala

One

Kavili

Two

Kavaga

Three

### 23. Marobo

### Marobo

Solo: Marobo

Solo: Marobo

All: Tanda robo

All: Tanda robo

Solo: Marobo

Solo: Marobo

All: Tanda robo

All: Tanda robo

Makina ketsa

The stones are coming

Makina ketsa

The stones are coming

Nokhinda, nosasakwa

If you delay, you are beaten

Nokhinda, nasasakwa

If you delay, you are beaten

(Sang repeatedly)

(Sang repeatedly)

#### **24. Obule Bwange**

#### **My Sorghum**

Solo: Obule bwange

Solo: My sorghum

All: Obule

All: Sorghum

Solo: Obule bwange

Solo: My sorghum

All: Obule

All: Sorghum

Solo: Nanzala bukha

Solo: Nanzala stand up

All: Obule

All: Sorghum

Solo: Khina mabeka

Solo: Shake your shoulders

All: Obule

All: Sorghum

Solo: Khina bulayi

Solo: Shake them well

All: Obule

All: Sorghum

Solo: Kalukha wikhale

Solo: Now return to your place

All: Obule

All: Sorghum

*(Repeated severally mentioning different names)*



## **25. Mlembe Yaya**

Mlembe yaya

Mlembe lundi?

Ochia ye?

Enjia wa senge

Ochiayo sina?

Enjoyo bifu

Nabututu alwala

Nangekhe omulamu

Khauru khenga?

Khauru khataru.

## **26. Khweya**

Khweya khweya

Khweya khweya nyumba

Mayi niye, weya

Kamanya khweya nyumba

Kukhu niye, weya

Kamanya, khweya nyumba

Khukweyeresya, weya

Inyuma nende akachi mwo khutekha.

## **Hallo Cousin**

Hallo cousin?

Hallo again?

Where are you going?

I am going to my aunt's

What for?

I am going for some little flour

Nabutulu is sick

Nangekhe is fine

What is the date today?

It is Wednesday.

## **Sweeping**

Sweeping, sweeping

Sweeping, sweeping the house

My mother is the one, who sweeps

She knows, to sweep the house

My grandmother is the one, who knows

She knows, to sweep the house

In good sweeping, one sweeps

Behind and around the cooking place.

**27. Isimba**

<i>The mother</i>	<i>The children</i>
Abana bange eny'we	ee
Esie nyina wenu	ee
Mbula mani khandi	ee
Kahaira isimba	ee
Isimba ni indulu	ee
Yera baba wenu	ee
Yera mama wenu	ee
Hana niwirukhe	ee

**28. Zakaria**

Zakaria Zakaria  
 Zakaria ikula muriango  
 Wakula mukati wanyima  
  
 Ndakhusaba sende wanyima  
  
 Walola etsiange wasaba  
  
 Mm, mm  
 Khalala mm  
 Khabiri mm

**Lion**

<i>The mother</i>	<i>The children</i>
My children	ee
I your mother	ee
I don't have energy	ee
To kill the lion	ee
Lion is harsh	ee
It killed your dad	ee
And your mother	ee
Now run	eeee

**Zacharia**

Zacharia, Zacharia  
 Zacharia, open the door  
 You bought bread and refused to share it  
 with me  
 I asked you money and you refused to lend  
 me  
 You saw me with mine and you  
 borrowed  
 Mm, mm  
 One mm  
 Two mm

### **29. Ing'ombe**

Katula katula katula kana x3

Katulaye na kana

Mabere kari mung'ombe x2

Katula x3 kana

Katulaye na kana

Mabere kari mung'ombe x2

Munzirae – bukwe Nyanza x3

Wa mama wo yafwira.

### **Cow**

Its coming out x3

Its coming out with a calf

Milk in the cow x2

Its coming out x3

Its coming out with a calf

Milk in the cow x2

Where are you taking me

West in Nyanza x2

That's where your mother died.

### **30. Inyama**

Inyama, inyama, inyama?

Inyamaaa!

Inyama, inyama, inyama?

Inyama!

Ye ing'ombe?

Inyama!

Ye likondi?

Inyama!

Ye lipunda?

(Onjera)

### **Meat**

Meat, meat, meat?

Meat!

Meat, meat, meat?

Meat!

A cow's meat?

Meat!

A sheep's meat?

Meat!

A donkey's meat?

(Silence)

### **31. Wabule Wange**

Wabule wange x2

Wafula inyokha x2

Upe mabeka, mabeka mene

Okobole wikhale x2

Wabule wange x2

Wekesa inyokha x2

Upe mabeka, mabeka mene

Okobole wikhale x2

Wabule wange x2

### **32. Ingio, Ingio Chacha**

Ingio ingio chacha x2

Maai kecha chacha x2

Kече ni kamabele chacha

huche hutile maai

Ingio ingio chacha x2

Papa kecha chacha x2

Kechela elala chacha

Kече ni ninyama

Huche hutile papa

### **My Friend**

My friend x2

Wafula stand and dance to our tune x2

Shake your shoulders like you will never dance again

Then come back and sit x2

My friend x2

Wekesa stand and dance to our tune x2

Shake your shoulders like you will never dance again

then come back and sit x2

My friend x2

### **Here Comes**

Here comes, chacha x2

Mother comes, chacha x2

She comes with milk, chacha

Let's get her

Here comes chacha x2

Father comes chacha x2

He comes with meat

Let's get him

To get our share

Ingio ingio chacha

Kukhu kecha chacha x2

Keche ni chigano

Huche hutile kukhu

Ingio ingio chacha x2

Ingio ingio chacha chacha

Here comes x2

Grandmother comes, chacha x2

She comes with stories

Lets get her

Here comes x2

Here comes, here comes, chacha

### **33. Mulina Wanje**

Mulina wanje, Mulina x2

Sarah vukha, Mulina

Sina mabekha, Mulina

Mabekha yene, Mulina

Auuwi chachacha x2

Mulina Wanje, Mulina x2

Mary vukha, Mulima

Sina mabekha, Mulina

Mabekha yene, Mulima

Auuwi chachacha x2

### **My Friend**

Friend of mine, Friend x2

Sarah stand up, Friend

Shake your shoulders, Friend

The real shoulders, Friend

Auuwi chachacha

Friend of mine Friend x2

Mary stand up Friend

Shake your shoulders Friend

The real shoulders Friend

Auuwi chachacha x2

### **34. Ndazia**

Ndazia wangoya ndanyola

mengu kolodelu

Ndazia Wangoya ndanyola

### **I Went**

I went to a village

called Wangoya and

found ripe bananas on a

mengu kolodehi

Gari amengu amalahi x2

Ndengomba mundu samba

kang'onda eeh eeh. x2

tray

They were very sweet x2

I wished somebody

would give me a ten cent coin to  
buy some.x2

### **35. Ngoko**

Ngoko yange yalela

mavuyu kindu ku ngo ngo ngo ngo

Muhinda yatula Ivulaya azulanya

Zwi kandi zwi kandi zwi kandi zwi

Ifula Ikwichanga

Ifula ikwichanga

Nafwe havaya mufula

Ifula ikwichanga

Nafwe havaya mufula

Ifula ikwichanga

Avana na vachafu mno.

### **My Hen**

My hen laid some eggs

ngo ngo ngo ngo

A rich man came from

Europe and he cries zwi zwi

Rain pours down

Rain pours down

We pay in the puddles

rain pours down

The children are muddy

Rain pours down

The children are muddy.

### **36. Ing'ombe Irida**

Ing'ombe irida, mboo

Ing'ombe irida, mboo

No omwana okalusya orio mno

Khumba mavere malahi

### **The Cow Mooed**

The cow mooed, mboo

The cow mooed, mboo

The child replied thank you

For giving me fresh milk

Imburi irira, mbee

Imburi irira, mbee

No omwana akalusya, orio mno

Khumba mavere malahi.

The goat bleated, mbee

The goat bleated, mbee

The child replied thank you

For giving me fresh milk.

### **37. Mulina**

Nenyanga Mulina

Nenyanga Mulina

Nenyanga Mulina

Mulina wa njakuli

Mulina wowo ni wina?

Mulina wowo ni wina?

Mulina wowo ni wina?

Mulina wu chakuli

Mulina wanje ni Florah

Mulina wanje ni Florah

Mulina wanje ni Florah

Mulina wa njakuli

### **Friend**

I want a friend

I want a friend

I want a friend

A friend I have chosen

Who is your friend?

Who is your friend?

Who is your friend?

A friend you have chosen

My friend is Florah

My friend is Florah

My friend is Florah

A friend I have chosen

### **38. Mother Shifyanani**

Mama shifyanani yali nu mwana

Yali mulwale, Mulwale, mulwale

Yatsia khu mushirishi

### **Mother Dolly**

Mother Dolly had a baby

Who is sick, sick, sick,

She went to the doctor

Khuva vwangu, vwangu, vwangu,  
 Mushirishi yitsa nu mufuko  
 Nende ikofia yeye  
 Na yitsa khumuliango  
 Muriviri tan, tan, tan,  
 Yahenza mwana  
 na Muvererera  
 Yavora mama amure  
 Khushiteli  
 Yavukila ikaratasi ni kalamu  
 Khurula musiko kwe kwe  
 Nahandika khu ikaratasi khu  
 Likovi likali likali

To be quick, quick, quick  
 The doctor came with his bag  
 And his hat  
 And he came on the door  
 with a tan tan, tan, tan,  
 He looked at the baby and  
 He shock his head  
 He said mother Dolly put  
 Her straight to bed  
 He took a paper and a pen  
 from his bag  
 And he wrote on a paper for  
 A big big bill.

### **39. Omwana wa Mama**

Omwana wa mama apepetanga x2  
 Atsia yo arula yo  
 Atsia yo Arula yo  
 Avarera mama anjonyere abirenje  
 Avarera mama anjonyere abirenje

### **A Mother's Child**

A mother's child goes wondering about x2  
 She goes here  
 She goes there  
 She comes home and says she is tired  
 She comes home and says she is tired



#### **40. Niwibule Omwana**

Niwibule omwana kenyakha asomisie

Omwana koo

Eee kenyekha asomesie omwana

Koo

Eee kenyekha asomesie omwana

Koo

#### **If You have a Baby**

If you give birth to a child you must educate him/her

The child ooh

You must educate your child.

ooh

You must educate your child.

ooh

#### **41. Omwana Oyo**

Omwana oyo aye

Omwana oyo nelinali

Nekhole ndiena aye x2

Nelinali

#### **That Child**

That child

That child is wicked

What will I do x2

He is wicked

#### **42. Ya! Ya! Ya!**

Solo: Ya! ya! ya!

Chorus: Ya! ya! ya

Solo: Andongo ingira

Chorus: Ya!

Solo: Wesungesunge

Chorus: Ya!

Solo: Welinyelinye

Chorus: Ya!

#### **Ya! Ya! Ya!**

Solo: Ya! ya! ya!

Chorus: Ya! ya! ya

Solo: Get in Andongo

Chorus: Ya!

Solo: Feel Proud

Chorus: Ya!

Solo: Pinch yourself

Chorus: Ya!

Solo: Khina sukusa

Chorus: Ya!

Solo: Khina so

Chorus: Ya!

Solo: Dance suskusa  
(dance style)

Chorus: Ya

Solo: Dance so  
(dance style)

Chorus: Ya!

### 43. Umbe Umbe

Solo: Umbe, Umbe

Chorus: Umbe , Umbe

Solo: Umbe Khanyama

Chorus: Umbe , Umbe

Solo: Auma singila

Chorus: Umbe , Umbe

Solo: Yuya Mabeka

Solo: Umbe , Umbe

Chorus: Yuya Bilahi

Solo: Umbe , Umbe

Chorus: kalukha Wikhale

Solo: Auii!

Chorus: Chachacha

### Umbe Umbe

Solo: Give me, give me

Chorus: Give me

Solo: Give me a piece of meat

Chorus: Give me

Solo: Auma stand up

Chorus: Give me, give me

Solo: Shake your shoulders

Solo: Give me, give me

Chorus: Shake them nicely

Solo: Give me

Chorus: Go back and sit

Solo: Auii!

Chorus: Chachacha

**44. Enyama**

Solo: Enyama, nyama  
Chorus: Enyama x2  
Solo: Eya Ingokho  
Chorus: Enyama!  
Solo: Eya Ing'ombe  
Chorus: Enyama!  
Solo: Eya Imbuzi  
Chorus: Enyama!  
Solo: Eya Mundu  
Chorus: (olela)  
Solo: Eya liyoyo  
Chorus: Enyama!

**Meat**

Solo: Meat, meat.  
Chorus: Meat  
Solo: A hen's  
Chorus: Meat!  
Solo: A cow's  
Chorus: Meat!  
Solo: A goat's  
Chorus: Meat!  
Solo: A person's  
Chorus: (silence)  
Solo: A duck's  
Chorus: Meat!

**45. Khweya**

Solo: Khweya  
Chorus: Khweya enyumba  
Solo: Sidete  
Chorus: Khweya  
Solo: Khwamanya  
Chorus: Khweya enyumba  
Solo: Namulumba  
Chorus: Khweya

**Sweeping**

Solo: Sweep x3  
Chorus: Sweep a house  
Solo: In the afternoon  
Chorus: Sweep  
Solo: We know  
Chorus: How to sweep a house  
Solo: Dried fish  
Chorus: Sweep

Solo: Khwamanya  
Chorus: Khweya enyumba

Solo: We know  
Chorus: How to sweep a house

#### 46. Kokorioko

Solo: Kokorioko  
Chorus: Ngwee  
Solo: Kokorioko  
Chorus: Ngwee  
All: Olubaaya, lubaya langwe x2  
Esiyembukanga bakhana  
Ngabalia engokho alala  
Na Nolubaya – Kutu! x2

#### Kokorioko

Solo: Kokorioko  
Chorus: Ngwee  
Solo: Kokorioko  
Chorus: Ngwee  
All: A wing, my wing  
Am wondering at  
girls  
How they eat chicken with  
Wings – Kutu! x2

#### 47. Khalisi

Khalisi no mulosi  
Efula nikwile  
Khalisi no mulosi  
Gegere gegere gege  
Auii! Nonyenda

#### Khalisi

Khalisi is a wizard  
When it has rained  
Khalisi is a wizard  
Gegere gegere gege  
Auui! Come for me.

#### 48. Imbiravili

Solo: Imbiravili  
Chorus: Ahaa!

#### Ladybird

Solo: lady bird  
Chorus: Ahaa!

Solo: Imbiravili  
 Chorus: Ahaa!  
 Solo: Aseyo singila  
 Chorus: Ahaa!  
 Solo: Gongga kolole  
 Chorus: Ahaa!  
 Solo: Yalina yikala  
 Chorus: Ahaa!

Solo: lady bird  
 Chorus: Ahaa!  
 Solo: Aseyo stand up  
 Chorus: Ahaa!  
 Solo: Smile we see  
 Chorus: Ahaa!  
 Solo: Come back and sit down  
 Chorus: Ahaa!

#### 49. Kwumbakira Musala Ki?

Solo: Vaana vange kwumbakira musala ki?  
 Chorus: Kwumbakira musangula x2  
 Solo: Vilango vyalinga?  
 Chorus: Viahana  
 Solo: Madirisha galiga?  
 Chorus: Galiga  
 Solo: Kunambitili hayi?

#### Which Tree Did we Built with?

Solo: My children which type of tree did we use for construction?  
 Chorus: We constructed with 'Musangula' (hard wood)  
 Solo: Are the doors secured tightly?  
 Chorus: They are closed  
 Solo: Are the windows secured?  
 Chorus: They are closed  
 Solo: Where will I pass?

Chorus: Hosi hololi

Chorus: Anywhere you can  
see

### 50. Hamba Mulina

Solo: Ha dreva

Chorus: Ha dreva

Solo: Ha dreva

Chorus: Ha dreva

Solo: Alivitsa hamba mulina

Chorus: Ha dreva

Solo: Nuhamba uhambe mulahi

Chorus: Ha dreva

### 51. Nangowe

Solo: Nangowe

Chorus: Kongolo

Solo: Gunani yigu

Chorus: Kongolo

Solo: Gwamala avana

Chorus: Cha, cha, cha.

### Choose a Friend

Solo: Ha dreva

Chorus: Ha dreva

Solo: Ha dreva

Chorus: Ha dreva

Solo: Alivitsa you chose a friend

Chorus: Ha dreva

Solo: If you choose,  
choose a good one

Chorus: Ha dreva

### Nangowe

Solo: Nangowe

Chorus: Kongolo

Solo: This monster (ogre)

Chorus: Kongolo

Solo: Has eaten all my  
children

Chorus: Cha, cha. cha

**52. Kongolo**

Solo: Ooh ! ooh!  
Chorus: Kongolo  
Solo: Vana vanje yavaa  
Chorus: Kongolo  
Solo: Varikala likhomi  
Chorus: Kongolo  
Solo: oh! kunaniyugu  
Chorus: Kongolo  
Solo: Kwa mala veve  
Chorus: Kongolo  
Solo: Kwenyanga kundi  
Chorus: Kongolo  
Solo: Kundu kusumba vutswa  
Chorus: Kongolo

**At the Back**

Solo: Ooh! Ooh!  
Chorus: At the back  
Solo: These are my children  
Chorus: At the Back  
Solo: Only ten are left  
Chorus: At the back  
Solo: Oh! This beast  
Chorus: At the Back  
Solo: It has eaten its children  
Chorus: At the back  
Solo: Now it wants to eat mine  
Chorus: At the Back  
Solo: A very ugly and lonely beast.  
Chorus: At the back

**53. Tsune**

Tsune tsune  
Andieku yatsia khusuma  
Yima mwana  
Mwana yatsia khusuma  
Yima Ndiegu  
Ndiegu ukhalila ku

**Pinch**

Pinch pinch  
Andieku went to get food  
He refused to give the child  
The child went to get food  
And refused to give Ndiegu  
Ndiegu stop crying?

Kava, kava, kava

Kava, kava, kava.

#### **54. Milembe**

#### **Greetings**

Milembe yaya, milembe lundi

Greetings my sister/brother,

greetings again

Milembe khinga, milembe khavili

How many greetings, greetings twice

Milembe gya wariga, milembe lundi

Greetings to you left, greetings  
again.

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## APPENDIX II

### LUO CHILDREN'S SINGING GAMES

#### 1. Paka Gi Oyieyo

#### Cat and Rat

Omo: Oyieyo, paka dwa mako oyieyo

Solo: Rat the cat wants to catch the rat

Olo: Oyieyo matin

All: The small rat

Oyieyo paka dwa mako oyieyo

Rat the cat want to catch cat

Oyieyo matin.

The small rat.

Omo: Oyieyo, paka dwa mako oyieyo

Solo: Rat, the cat wants to catch the rat

Olo: Oyieyo maduong'

All: The big rat

Oyieyo paka dwa mako oyieyo

Rat the cat wants to catch the rat

Oyieyo maduong'.

The big rat.

#### 2. Badyien

#### A ring

Tol, Tol mar mafuwa

A ring, a ring of roses

mufuko mopong gi mafuwa

a packet full of roses a

badyien, badyien

A trees's branch

wa duto wa gore piny

Let's all fall down

Rech ni epi,

The fishes in the water

Rech ni epi badyien, badyien

the fishes in the water, a tissue

gi duto gi chung malo.

a tissue, they all stand up.

### 3. Kuom Adier

Kuom adier aheri Nyathi

Nyathi wuoda

Wuode owuon

Wuod ngato

Ngato e wuod bungu

### 4. N'gielo

Solo: Ng'ielo ng'ielo x2

All: Ng'ielo jagodhrex2

Solo: Kata kuma oaye

All: Ng'ielo jagodhre

Solo: Kata kuma odhiye

All: Ng'ielo jagodhre

Solo: Ka omako ng'ato

All: Ng'ielo jagodhre

Solo: Ne opowore e od maro

All: Raten'g sesegere powe

### 5. Mumi Gocho

Mumi gocho

Kamongo ja kondakta

### For Sure

For sure I love you baby

The baby to my son

The son to the owner

The son to the owner

The son to the bush

### Python

Solo: Python python x2

All: Python the meanderer x2

Solo: Where he comes from

All: Python the meanderer

Solo: Where he goes

All: Python the meanderer

Solo: If he catches one

All: Python the meanderer

Solo: He bursts into mother-in-law's house

All: The black one 'sesegere powe'

### The Catfish Plays

The catfish plays

The mudfish conducts

Sire kapten

Omena chodho twisti.

## **6. Tugo**

Tugo orumo dhi dalau

Onget riti dhi nindi

Jajuok opada maleng'ora

Koka openja ka be ainyora x3

## **7. Dhako**

Dhako kia ng'weto

ng'wed alot x2

Kado bende chwak mochini

Tim kamae mondo ine

ka joma ipidho omere kuon.

## **8. Dana Korirego?**

Dana korirego?

Eeh korarego

Iregu kuon ga ng'o wa?

Aregu kuon gi mbuta

Ng'ama no mi-i?

Wuon pachu

Catfish is the captain

Dagger dances the twist.

## **Game**

The game is over go home

The blanket is waiting for you, go and sleep

The night runner slapped me till I jumped

Then he is asks me if I am hurt x3

## **Woman**

Woman doesn't know to pick

pick the vegetables x2

Boil also the soup properly

Do like this so that you may see how

Those you are feeding are drunk with ugali.

## **Grandma You are Grinding?**

My grandmother, are you grinding?

Yes, I am grinding

You are grinding the ugali and what?

I am grinding ugali and nileperch

Who gave you?

The man of the homestead (my husband)

Wuon pachu mana winjo

ni nyang' omako cha?

Iwacho adier?

Awacho adier

Iwacho adier?

Uwi-i chuora, aaah uwi-i chuora!

Chuora ma wuon opocho

Emo nyang omoko , ehe?

The one whom I heard that the

Crocodile got hold of?

Are you telling the truth?

Yes, I am telling the truth

Are you telling the truth?

Uwi-i my husband, aaa uwi my husband!

My husband who is the head of the home

Is the one that the crocodile got hold of,  
ehe?

## 9. Matunda

Solo: Matunda Matunda x2

All: Ee matunda x2

Solo: Nyithindo wer uru uduto

All: Ee matunda

Solo: Nyithindo pam uru uduto

All: Ee matunda

Solo: Matunda Matunda x2

All: Ee matunda x2

Nyithindo miel uru udut

Nyithindo mor uru uduto

## Fruit

Fruit Fruit x2

Ee fruit x2

Children may you all sing

Ee fruit

Children may you all clap

Ee fruit

Fruit Fruit x2

Ee fruit x2

Children may you all dance

Children may you all rejoice

### **10. Nyithindo Matindo**

Solo: Nyithindo matindo

Biuru watugi

All: Koda kidi

Solo: Watugi

All: Koda kidi

Solo: Sudna kucha

All: Sudna kucha marobo

Tanda robo marobo

tanda robo x2

### **Little Children**

Solo: Little children

Come we play

All: With stones

Solo: We may play

All: With stones

Solo: Move from me away

All: Move from me away

Tanda robo, Marobo

tanda robo x2

### **11. Ya Ya Ya Ya**

Solo: Ya Ya Ya Ya

All: Ya Ya!

Solo: Ya Ya Ya Ya

All: Ya Ya!

Solo: Atieno donji diere

All: Ya!

Solo: Mondo isungri matin

All: Ya!

Solo: Mondo imiel dodo matin

All: Ya!

### **Ya Ya Ya Ya**

Solo: Ya Ya Ya Ya

All: Ya Ya!

Solo: Ya Ya Ya Ya

All: Ya Ya!

Solo: Atieno get into the centre

All: Ya!

Solo: Boast a little bit

All: Ya!

Solo: So you dance “dodo” a bit

All: Ya!

Solo: Kerdo inindi piny ka rombo

All: Ya!

## **12. Atung' Rombo**

Miel kar kende, atung' rombo

Nyamadika ma miel kar kende

Atung' rombo nyamadika

Miel miendi mondo one, atong' rombo

Nyamadika ma miel kar kende

Atung' rombo nyamadika

Bangping tarino an'go kendo

Kung fu!

## **13. Nyithi Gwen Chiemo**

Nyithind gwen chamo benda x2

Kan'g awacho ni taketho x2

Nyithind gwen chamo odumba x2

Kan'g awacho ni taketho x2

Ogwal pitu, pitu x2

Solo: Then you lie down like a sheep

All: Ya!

## **Horned Sheep**

Dances on its own horned sheep

Nyamadika that dances on its own

horned sheep, nyamadika

Dance your dance so that you are seen,  
horned sheep

Nyamadika, that dances on its own

Horned sheep, nyamadika

Bang ping tarino what again

Kung fu!

## **Chicks are Eating**

Chicks are eating my millet x2

If I say, I've done something bad x2

Chicks are eating my maize x2

If I say I have done something bad x2

Frog, pitu, pitu x2

**14. Chiemo mit ka bii ine**

Cheimo mit ka bii ine

Chwakoga mochiek mochwiny

Kado kichwako mochwiny

Dendi dwogo kare chuth,

Lwok alot, tedi kwon mochiek

Mochwiny

Bilie ara ine dendi

Dwogo kare chuth

**Food is sweet here come and see**

Food is sweet here, come and see

Boiled edibly and soft

Soup if prepared well give the body

It's true shape

Wash the greens and prepare good ugali

Well prepared

Taste it and see your body get its

True shape and form.

**15. Soore yawa soore**

Soore yawa soore x2

Nyara manyocha nyuolo soore,

Yawa soore chuore adhigo

Mombasa soore yawa soore.

Ochako dhigo Nakuru, soore

Yawa soore, kendo adhigo

Nairobi, soore yawa soore

Anyango chung mondo imielie

onienie soore yawa soore.

**Gather around now gather around**

Gather around now gather around x2

My daughter that I just bore the other day

Has gone to Mombasa with her husband

Gather around now gather around. They've

gone to Nakuru too, gather around and even to

Nairobi, gather around now gather around.

Anyango, stand up and dance so that they

can see you. Gather around now gather Mondo

around.

**16. Jachan oyanyo paka**

Chachan oyanyo paka, paka dwoke

Chiedhni, tinichiem kure, tininind

Kure to tinibed kure chiethni dhi  
dalau

jajuok otimo neno, odhielemo

chacha omuga ojuoga chacha

jitimo neno kuome.

**A poor man insults the cat**

A poor man insults the cat, the cats

Insults him back your feases, and asks where  
will you

Eat, where will you sleep and rest your feases  
go back home

A wizard gives testimony, to worship

Prays, the wizard is in a tight spot

The whole church scones him with prayer.

**17. Eyawa ka wadonjo**

Eyawa ka wadonjo to wan gi tugo

Ka wodonjo to wan gi tugo adier

Aah yae ka wadonjo to wan gi tugo

Tukwa loyo tuku aah to miendwa loyo

Mendu awacho adier aah ae ka

Wadonjo to wan gi tugo.

**People when we arrive**

People when we arrive we have a play

For real our play is better

Than yours and our dance is

Better than yours I tell you for

Real if we arrive we have a

Play, dance, song.

**18. Nyako Nyingi Ng'awa**

Nyako nyingi ng'awa kadumbele taska

Nyako, nyinga Auma, Kadumbele taska

Auma, mar gi ng'awa, kadumbele taska

Auma mar gi Akinyi, kadumbele taska

**Girl what's your name?**

Girl, what is your name, kadumbele taska

Girl, my name is Auma, kadumbele taska

Auma who is related to who kadumbele taska

Auma who is related to Akinyi kadumbele taska



Nyako nyingi ng'awa, kadumbele taska	Girl, what is your name, kadumbele taska
Nyako, nyinga Atieno, kadumbele taska	Girl, my name is Atieno, kadumbele taska
Atieno, mar gi ngawa, kadumbele taska	Atieno who is related to who, kadumbele taska
Atieno mar gi Onyango, kadumbele taska	Atieno who is Onyango's sister, kadumbele taska.

### **19. Kababa**

Kababa wanai mana karombo,  
 Wanai mana rombo  
 Li ka rombo wana, mana karombo

Kababa wana pur mana kadhano  
 Wanapur mana kadhano  
 Puro ka dhano, wanapur mana kadhano  
 Kababa wana miel mana ka ofisa  
 Wana miel man ka ofisa  
 Miel ka ofisa wana miel ka ofisa

Kababa wana wer mana ka ngai  
 Wana wer mana ka ngai  
 Wero ka ngai, wana wer mana ka ngai

### **Kababa**

In our society we will fight like sheep  
 We will fight like sheep  
 Fighting like sheep, we will fight like sheep.

In our society we will dig like men  
 We will dig like men  
 Digging like men, we will dig like men  
 In our society we will dance like an officer  
 We will dance like an officer  
 Dancing like an officer we will dance like an officer

In our society we will sing like a song bird  
 We will sing like a songbird  
 Singing like a songbird, we will sing like a singbird.

## 20. Gaudencia

Gaudencia, nyathi gi Okumu

Ang'omo otimi?

Achwanyo tienda

Ka ichwanyo tiendi, ter ne baba

Baba wacho, ni ter ne mama

Mama to wacho, ter ni jo siptal

Jo spital penjo, ere kadi ni,

Ni, an nyathi skul

Japuonj u nyinge ng'a?

John ja Kisii

To bende ochwado u?

Aaa, ok achwadwa

Opuonjou nang'o?

Opuonja ni a, e, i, o, u.

## 21. Wadwaro Osiepwa

Group A: Wan wadwaro osiepwa

Wan wadwaro owiepwa

Ma wanyalo ywayo

Group B: Osiepu en ng'awa?

Osiepu en ng'awa?

Ma mondo obi olimu

## Gaudencia

Gaudencia sister to Okumu

What has happened, to you?

I have sprained my leg

If you've sprained your leg tell father

Father says tell mother

Mother says go to hospital

People of hospital are asking where is your card

I am a school girl

What is your teacher's name?

John from Kisii

Does he cane you?

Aaa, he doesn't cane us.

How does he teach you?

He teaches a, e, i, o, u.

## We want a friend

Group A: We want our friend

We want our friend

Whom we can pull

Group B: Who is your friend?

Who is your friend?

Who should come and visit you?

Group A: Osiepwa en Achieng'

Asiepwa en Achieng'

All: Achieng' oriti

Dhi ited kuon ma odhiek

Group A: Our friend is Achieng'

Our friend is Achieng'

All: Achieng' goodbye

Go and cook soft Ugali.

## 22. Oyundi

First: Oyundi ni dhi ing'weti

Second: Oyundo ni tienda lit

First: Oyundi ni dhi imoti

Second: Oyundi ni tenda lit

First: Oyundi ni dhi iluoki

Second: Oyundi ni tenda lit

First: Oyundi ni dhi kulo

Second: Oyundi ni tenda lit

First: Oyundi ni dhi iregi

Second: Oyundi ni tenda lit

First: Oyundi ni bi chiem

Second: Oyundi ni "sesese"

## Sparrow

First: Sparrow go and gather  
vegetables

Second: Sparrow says my leg is sick

First: Sparrow go and collect firewood

Second: Sparrow says my leg is sick

First: Sparrow go and wash

Second: Sparrow says my leg is sick

First: Sparrow go and fetch water

Second: Sparrow says my leg is sick

First: Sparrow go and grind flour

Second: Sparrow says my leg is sick

First: Sparrow come and eat

Second: Sparrow "sesese"

## 23. Nyarombo

Leader: Nyarombo mee

Players: Mee

Leader: Miya nyithinda

## The Lamb

Leader: The Lamb mee

Leader: Mee

Leader: Give me my children

Players: Mee

Leader: Acham godo obuolo

Players: Mee

Leader: Obuolo ma Milambo

Players: Mee

Leader: Ocham go mwanda

Players: Mee

Leader: Mwanda ma milambo

Players: Mee

Leader: Tel: - tel ma liyo

Tel – tel ma liyo

Otieko nyithinda duto

Leader: Mee

Leader: So that we can eat mushrooms

Leader: Mee

Leader: Mushrooms from the south

Leader: Mee

Leader: So that we can eat a deer

Leader: Mee

Leader: A deer from south

Leader: Mee

Leader: The whistling woodpecker

The whistling woodpecker

Has finished my children

#### **24. Japuonj Puonja**

Japuonj puonja ni mondo ang'e ndiko

Ndiko ber x2

Japuonj puonja ni mondo ang'e somo

Somo ber x2

Japuonj puonja ni mondo ang'e kwano

Kwano ber x2

Japuonj puonja ni mondo ang'e Kisungu

Kisungu ber x2

Japuonj puonja ni mondo ang'e ndiko

#### **Teacher Teaches**

Teacher teaches me to know how to write

Writing is good x2

Teacher teaches me to know how to read

Reading is good x2

Teacher teaches me to know Maths

Maths is good x2

Teacher teaches me to know English

English is good x2

Teacher teaches me to know how to write

Ndiko ber x2

Japuonj puonja ni mondo ang'e ndiko

Ndiko ber x2

Aah mama, somo ber makata itima

Itama somo ber.

## 25. Adhis

Adhis x2

Adhis nyako ka iwango agulu

Mar chielo mbuta, ok nene okonyi,

e ngima ma sani

Tem matek pio pio iyud barupi

Kuon biro ka opong'o mesa, woug na oko

I take the ring'o halafu, u take the chogo.

Atis x2

Atis nyako ka iwango agulu

Mar chielo mbuta, ok nene okonyi,

e ngima ma sani

Tem matek pio pio iyud barapu

Kuon biro ka opong'o mesa, woug na oko

I take the ring'o halafu, u take the chogo.

Writing is good x2

Teacher teaches me to know how to write

Writing is good x2

Dear mother, learning is good even though  
you do not

Want me to learn, learning is good.

## Adhis

Adhis x2

Adhis if you burn the cooking pot, for  
for frying Nile perch, it will not help  
you in future.

Try hard and get your certificate

Ugali will be full on the table, get out

I take the meat and you take the bone x2

Atis x2

Atis if you burn the cooking pot, for cooking  
For frying Nile perch, it will not help you in  
future.

Try hard and get your certificate

Ugali will be full on the table, get out

I take the meat and you take the bone x2

**26. Obel**

Leader: Wololo

Prayer: Obel x2

All: Wololo Obel x2

Leader: Obel mak na chonga

Ma chonga rama

All: Obel mak na chonga Obel

Leader: Obel mak na wiya

Ma wiya bara

All: Obel mak na wiya Obel

**Doctor**

Leader: Wololo

Prayer: Doctor

All: Wololo Doctor

Leader: Doctor touch my knee

For my knee is paining

All: Doctor touch my knee Doctor

Leader: Doctor touch my head

For I have a headache

All: Doctor touch my head Doctor

**27. Maro Jarego**

Maro jarego owiye, maro ja rego owiye x2

Maro jarego owiye, maro ja rego owiye x2

Maro malando owiye, maro malando owiye x2

Maro malando owiye, maro malando owiye x2

Maro jang'weto, owiye maro jang'weto owiye

Maro jang'weto owiye maro jang'weto owiye

**Mother-in-law grinds**

Mother-in-law grinds, owiye x2

Mother-in-law grinds, owiye x2

Mother-in-law's complexion is fair  
owiye

Mother-in-law's complexion is fair  
owiye

Mother-in-law picks vegetables owiye

Mother-in-law picks vegetables owiye

## **28. Adila mit**

Adila mit kitwomo, kitwome go okombe to

Awinja ka chunya dwaro, Jaber atwom nie  
Adila

Jomoko bende kawacho ni mbuta go omena  
dagger chiemo mojoga, mbuta dum na ahinya.

## **29. Dereba**

Dereba, dereba medi mach

Dereba, dereba medi mach

Riembo ga ka ing'eyo ni nyoul bende tek x2

Dereba, dereba medi mach

Dereba, dereba medi mach

Riembo ga ka ing'eyo ni kuon bende mit x2

Dereba, dereba medi mach

Dereba, dereba medi mach

Riembo ga ka ing'eyo ni ndara bende racha x2

## **Sour Milk**

Sour milk is sweet when you scoop it with a  
cup

Awinja when I need it, I put it in the "Adila"

Some people are saying that Nile Perch and  
are bad food. Nile Perch smells bad.

## **Driver**

Driver driver add more speed

Driver driver add more speed

Drive knowing that giving birth is  
hard x2

Driver driver add more speed

Driver driver add more speed

Drive knowing that Ugali is still very  
sweet x2

Driver driver add more speed

Driver driver add more speed

Drive knowing that the road is bad x2

### 30. Japounj Moro

**Solo:** Japuonj moro nyocha okwayo rusa  
niodwa onge e juma ni.

**Chorus:** Odhi Kanye?

**Solo:** Japuonj odhi Kisumu gi lolwe

**Chorus:** Oomo Ang'o?

**Solo:** Japuonj oomo okombe gi tate

**Chorus:** Omiyo ng'a?

**Solo:** Japounj omiyo Anyango jalocho

**Chorus:** Oloyo adi

**Solo:** Oloyo miche gi miche

### A Certain Teacher

**Solo:** A certain teacher asked  
permission that he won't  
be around this week.

**Chorus:** Where is he going?

**Solo:** The teacher is going  
to Kisumu by Lake  
Victoria.

**Chorus:** What is he going to bring?

**Solo:** The teacher is going  
to bring medals

**Chorus:** Who is going to be given?

**Solo:** The teacher is going  
to give Anyango the  
champion

**Chorus:** How many goals did she  
score?

**Solo:** She scored hundreds and  
hundreds.



### **31. Ring'o ring'o ring'o**

Ring'o ring'o ring'o?

Mar dhiang?

Mar diel?

Mar rombo?

Mar guok?

Mar punda etc.

### **Meat Meat, meat**

Meat, Meat, meat?

For a cow?

For a goat?

For a sheep?

For a dog?

For a donkey?

### **32. Janyawo**

Janyawo wanyiero

Odong e dala,

Kamin mare kone nyathina konya

Onyiero ni ha ha ha

Kane bed ni otegno

Dikoro ober

### **Lazy boy**

Lazy boy we laugh at you

He remains in the home

When the mother asks him to help her,

He laughs ha, ha, ha,

In case he was strong

He would have been good.

### **33. Baby girl**

Always sung in English even by small children

Translation in Luo not available.

### **Babligan babligan**

Babligan babligan, number 28, I went  
for a walk but now I stop on a bridge.

Zero plus Zero is Zero, round.

And now touch down. I am a boy

This is an action, I must do, salute for

the king and bend for the queen. Close your  
eyes and count fifteen. 1-15

### 34. Rao rao rabet

Rao rao rabet gino okala kaa

Wololo wololo wololo wololo

mano en maduong

Gino nyono piny matek

### Hippo hippo

Hippo hippo hippo the big animal  
passes here

Wololo wololo wololo wololo

That is a very big animal.

That animal stamps the ground.

### 35. Oringo

Solo: Oringo

Chorus: Mbayaya

Solo: Oringo

Chorus: Mbayaya

Solo: Baba Atieno piga magoti.

Tukiona sura yako mbingli mbingli

Oringo

Chorus: Mbayaya

Solo: Simama nyote simama

Sote chacha chalingi yingi

Chacha chalingi x4

### Oringo

Solo: Oringo

Chorus: Mbayaya

Solo: Oringo

Chorus: Mbayaya

Solo: Father Atieno kneel  
down

So that we see your  
face Mbingli mbingli

Oringo

Chorus: Mbayaya

Solo: Stand all stand all

chacha changilingi

chacha chalingi x4

### 36. Umbe umbe

Solo: Umbe umbe  
Chorus: Umbe umbe  
Solo: Umbe Kanyama  
Chorus: Mbeu mbe  
Solo: Erick luora  
Chorus: Mbeu mbe  
Solo: Sika nywele  
Chorus: Mbeu mbe  
Solo: Shika marinda  
Chorus: Mbeu mbe  
Solo: A uuwiii  
Chorus: chacha cha

### Umbe umbe

Solo: Umbe umbe  
Chorus: Umbe umbe  
Solo: Umbe Meat  
Chorus: Mbeu mbe  
Solo: Erick walk around me  
Chorus: Mbeu mbe  
Solo: Touch your hair  
Chorus: Mbeu mbe  
Solo: Touch your dress  
Chorus: Mbeu mbe  
Solo: A uuwiiiiii!  
Chorus: Chacha cha

### 37. Bet angewa

Bet angewa  
Jochiro odagi  
Lwang'ni fuyo  
To guogi nan'go

### Sitting exposed

Sitting exposed  
Is prohibited by market traders  
Flies buzz  
And dogs lick

### **38. Ratonga akwaya**

Solo: Wach kode  
Aa wach kode  
Chorus: Ratong akwaya

Solo: Wach kode  
Aa wach kode  
Chorus: Ratong akwaya

Solo: Mach otho enyoyo  
Mach otho enyoyo x2  
Chorus: Ratong akwaya

Solo: Mach otho enyoyo  
Mach otho enyoyo x2

### **39. Akuru Nyabondo**

Akuru Nyabondo  
Kimiya mo

### **The borrowed machete**

Solo: Talk with it,  
talk with it  
Chorus: The borrowed  
machete

Solo: Talk with it,  
talk with it  
Chorus: The borrowed  
machete

Solo: Fire has died under  
“Nyoyo”  
Fire has died under  
“Nyoyo” x2  
Chorus: The borrowed  
Machete

Solo: Fire has died under  
“Nyoyo”  
Fire has died under  
“Nyoyo” x2

### **Pigeon daughter of bondo**

Pigeon daughter of Obondo  
Please give me some cream

Aketie ko

Ko lodhi

Kidhe, kidhe, kidhe

To put in a churn

So the churn can yield

Kidhe, kidhe, kidhe

#### **40. Min Okumu**

Solo: Min Okum watemie, miel

Otami?

Chorus: Amil wan'g

Solo: Min Okum watemie, miel

Otami?

Chorus: Amil wan'g

Solo: Abakunda

Chorus: Abakunda kunda

Amil wan'g

Solo: Abakunda

Chorus: Abakunda kunda

Amil wan'g

#### **Okumu's Mother**

Solo: Okumu's mother lets

we try to dance

You can't dance?

Chorus: Twinkle of an eye

Solo: Okumu's mother lets

try to dance

You can't dance?

Chorus: Twinkle of an eye

Solo: Abakunda

Chorus: Abakunda kunda

Twinkle of an eye

Solo: Abakunda

Chorus: Abakunda kunda

Twinkle of an eye

#### **41. Owan'g winyo ma nyaksure**

Solo: Winyo ma nyaksure

Owan'g winyo ma nyaksure

#### **The crested crane bird**

Solo: The crested crane bird

crane the crested bird

Chorus:	Kadhano x2	Chorus:	Like a human being x2
Solo:	Winyo go buombe Winyo go buombe	Solo:	Flaps its wings Flaps its wings
Chorus:	Kadhano x2	Chorus:	Like a human being x2
Solo:	Ah	Solo:	Ah
Chorus:	Owan'g winyo ma nyaksure Kadhano	Chorus:	Crane the crested bird Like a human being
Solo:	Winyo ma jasunga Owan'g winyo majasunga	Solo:	The proud bird, crane The proud bird
Chorus:	Kadhano x2	Chorus:	Like a human being x2
Solo:	Ooh	Solo:	Ooh
Chorus:	Owan'g Owan'g winyo ma jasunga Kadhano	Solo:	crane crane the proud bird Like a human being

#### 42. Kitambacha Olal

Solo:	Kitambacha olal
Chorus:	Manye
Solo:	Kitambacha olal
Chorus:	Manye

#### I Lost My Handkerchief

Solo:	My handkerchief is lost
Chorus:	Search for it
Solo:	My handkerchief is lost
Chorus:	Search for it

Solo: Ok en in

Chorus: Manye

Solo: En in

Solo: Its not you.

Chorus: Search for it

Solo: Its you.

(The pointed person takes over as the soloist).

### 43. Olembe

Olembe Olembe ee olembe

Olembe Olembe ee olembe

Nyathindo ponuru olembe

Ee Wapono

Nyathindo ponuru olembe

Ee Wapono

Nyathindo ponuru olembe

Ee Wapono

Nyithindo ting'uru odheche

Ee Watingo

Nyithindo ting'uru odheche

Ee Watingo

### Fruits

Fruits fruits ee fruits

Fruits fruits ee fruits

Children to pick fruits ee we've

Ee we've picked

Children to pick fruits ee we've

Ee we've picked

Children to pick fruits ee we've

Ee we've picked

Children carry the winnower (traditional tray)

Ee we've carried

Children carry the winnower (traditional tray)

ee we've carried

**44. Matin****Small**

Matin koyieyo

Small like a rat

Matin koyieyo

Small like a rat

Mabor katiga

Tall like a giraffe

Mabor katiga

Tall like a giraffe

Mokuot kaliech

Big like an elephant

Mokuot kaliech

Big like an elephant

Matin koyieyo

Small like a rat

Matin koyieyo

Small like a rat

Mabor katiga

Tall like a giraffe

Mabor katiga

Tall like a giraffe

Mokuot kaliech

Big like an elephant

Mokuot kaliech

Big like an elephant

**45. Ogwal kwitho iwe****A frog shakes it's tail**

Ogwal kwitho iwe kalanda

A frog shakes it's tail

Ogwal kwitho iwe kalanda

A frog shakes it's tail

Makineno to ilin'g ling'a

If you see, you just keep quite

Ogwal kwitho iwe kalanda

A frog shakes it's tail



Makineno to iwuora awuora

If you see you wonder

Makineno to iwuora awuora

If you see you wonder

Eee cha obiro ngili ngili iwete ngili

Eee its coming to swallow the

Ngili

hands swallow

Eee cha obiro ngili ngili iwete ngili

Eee its coming to swallow the

Ngili

hands swallow

Odho chamo omena, ngili ngili

It's going to eat dagger without chewing

Odhi chamo fulu ei nam

It's going to eat small fish in the lake

Odhi chamo fulu ei nam

It's going to eat small fish in the lake

#### **46. Tula**

#### **The Owl**

Tula odonjo arum tula

The owl has come

Winyo ma duong

The big bird

Tula odonjo arum tula

The owl has come

Winyo ma duong

The big bird

Tula kora odonjo

The owl has come

Arum koga winyo maduong'

Owl the big bird

Mogero kata ode arum tula

It has built it's house

Kogendo to ogedo gi yien

It builds with wood

Arum tula winyo maduong'

Owl the big bird

Winyo biro gwari arum tula

Winyo biro gwari yawa

Arum tula winyo maduong'

Owl will scratch you

Owl will scratch you

Owl the big bird

**47. Nguru nguru mee**

Nguru nguru mee

Nguru nguru mee

Wan ka wan otonglo

Wan ka wan otonglo

**Nguru nguru Mee**

Nguru nguru Mee

Nguru nguru Mee

We have a cent here

We have a cent here

Mara bala kit otonglo ma biro

Makelo ndurere goka mterere

Mterere kibo.

Like the shape and colour of cent

that brings ndurere muu shoulder "mterere

Mterere kibo".

Achiel nyadirio go mana ma

Ma tiwe ma kiny

Igol kiny go kinyi

Agol ma kadani

Once twice just put here

Today and this tomorrow

Remove every morning

Remove grandmother's

**48. Arina**

Arina rina rina

Aa rina rina

Arina rina rina

Aa rina rina

**Arina**

'A rina rina rina'

'Aah rina rina'

'A rina rina rina'

'Aah rina rina'

Arina opot ewiya ee,  
Opot ewiya ee arina  
Arina opot goka  
Opot e goka ee arina

Arina at my head  
At my head eeh arina.  
Arina at my shoulder  
At my shoulder eeh arina

Arina opot e nunga ee  
Opot enunga ee arina  
Arina opot e chonga ee  
Opot chonga ee arina

Arina at my waist eeh  
At my waist eeh arina  
Arina at my knee eeh  
At my knee eeh arina

Aa aa aa

Aah aah aah

Ee ee ee ee

eeh eeh eeh eeh

Ii ii ii

ii ii ii ii

Oo oo oo

ooh ooh ooh

Uu uu uu kadush

uu uu uu

#### **49. Atis atugna**

#### **Atis let me play**

Atis atugna, atis atugna, atis  
Atis atugna, atis atugna, atis

Atis let me play, Atis let me play, Atis  
Atis let me play, Atis let me play, Atis

Atis angwetna, atis angwetna, atis  
Atis angwetna, atis angwetna, atis

Atis let me pluck the vegetable, Atis  
Atis let me pluck the vegetable, Atis

Atis atedna, Atis angwetna, Atis

Atis atedna, Atis angwetna, Atis

Atis aumbna, Atis aumbna, Atis

Atis

Atis aumbna, Atis aumbna, Atis

Atis

Atis let me cook Atis let me cook, Atis

Atis let me cook Atis let me cook, Atis

Atis let me fetch water, Atis let me fetch water,

Atis let me fetch water, Atis let me fetch water,

#### **50. Adush solea**

Adush adush adush solea

Omena gobamboje

Law mar kitenge

E msip mar madiaba

Nakuso rasta, nakuso rasta

Adhie e duka

Ayudo mzee Juma kauso

Mafuta to a penje

bei bei pesa adi?

Bei elfu achiel

Ha ka nyaka kucha

#### **Adush solea**

Adush adush adush solea

Dagger and dried fish is like

Your kanga (cloth)

It like your big belt

I made the rasta style of hair

I went to the shop

Found mzee Juma selling

paraffin

I asked the price, what's the price?

The price is one thousand

From here to there,

Ka nyaka kucha

Here to there

**51. Utera Kanye?**

**Where are you taking me?**

Utera Kanye?

Where are you taking me?

Wateri kadani

We are taking you to grandmother's place

Mwodo nyoyo

Grandmother's place to eat boiled maize and beans

Utera kanye?

Where are you taking me?

Wateri, kadani madho nyuka

We are taking yo to grandmother's place to drink porridge

Utera Kanye?

Where are you taking me?

Wateri kadani

We are taking you to grandmother's place

Gweno odeyo

ugali's remains

Ero nind aninda

Just sleep I will come back

Kanyo aduogo ee

I've found him, I've found him

Ayude ayude

**52. Awino**

**Awino**

Omo benda, omo benda

To bring my millet

Omo benda, omo benda

To bring my millet

Omo benda, omo benda

To bring my millet

Omo benda, areg benda

To bring my millet,

Awino nyathiwa

Awino my sister

Areg benda, areg benda

To grind my millet,

Areg benda, areg benda

To grind my millet,

Areg benda,

To grind my millet,

Awino nyathiwa

Awino my sister

A ted benda, a ted benda

To cook my millet,

A ted benda, a ted benda

To cook my millet,

A ted benda,

To cook my millet

Awino nyathiwa

Awino my sister

### **53. Min Omolo**

### **Omolo's mother**

Hee hee ya uu uu uu

Heeeh heeeh yaah uu uu

Lew guok otimo choke

The dog's tongue is bonny

Chiro korua

At korua's market

Nyithindogi unyiero ango?

You children what are you laughing at?

Wanyiero chong min Omolo motimo leche. We are laughing at the vericose veined legs  
of Omolo's mother

Tang ane

Show it then

Atang ango?

Show what?

Di ane adiyo dich

I have pressed it.

**54. Ka ngato ok opangore**

**If one doesn't exercise**

Ka ngato ok opangore

If one doesn't exercise

Ok onyalo riek

He/She can't be clever

Chonge Otimo mbata

The knees weaken

Wiye dok chien

The brain slows down

Onyosore ka punda

He/She weakens like a donkey

Ma nyosore go wuoth

Which is tired of walking

Adieri pongruok ojiwowa

Truly, exercise strengthen us

Pongruok ojiwo wa

Exercises strengthen us.

### APPENDIX III

#### URBAN CHILDREN'S SINGING GAMES SUNG BY LUHYA AND LUO CHILDREN

- |           |                          |                             |
|-----------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>1.</b> | <b>Nyama nyama nyama</b> | <b>Meat meat meat</b>       |
|           | Nyama, nyama nyama       | Meat, meat, meat            |
|           | Nyama                    | Meat                        |
|           | Nyama, nyama nyama       | Meat, meat, meat            |
|           | Nyama                    | Meat                        |
|           | Nyama ya mbuzi           | Meat of a goat              |
|           | Nyama                    | Meat                        |
|           | Nyama ya kuku            | Meat of a chicken           |
|           | Nyama                    | Meat                        |
|           | Nyama ya mbwa            | Meat of a dog               |
|           | (kimya)                  | (silent)                    |
|           | Nyama ya ng'ombe         | Meat of a cow               |
|           | (Watoto wanaruka)        | (The children jump)         |
| <b>2.</b> | <b>Ringo eh ringo</b>    | <b>Ringo eh ringo</b>       |
|           | Peremende tamu tamu eeh  | Sweets very, very sweet     |
|           | Ringo eeh ringo          | Ringo eeh ringo             |
|           | Peremende tamu tamu eeh  | Sweets very, very sweet eeh |
|           | Dada cheze ngoma         | Sister dance the tune       |



Peremende tamu tamu eeh

Ndugu cheze ngoma

Peremende tamu tamu eeh

Mama cheze ngoma

Peremende tamu tamu eeh

Sweets very, very sweet eeh

Brother dance the tune

Sweets very, very sweet eeh

Mother dance the tune

Sweets very, very sweet eeh

**3. Sungura**

Sungura, sungura

manja we x2

Ingawa mdogo

Kashinda wakubwa

Ulipata wapi akili zako?

**Hare**

Hare, hare

You are clever x2

Even though small

You beat the big ones

Where did you get your bravery?

**4. Maskini Punda**

Maskini Punda

Aliye nyimwa pembe

Akapewa masikio

Badala ya pembe

**Poor Donkey**

Poor, Poor donkey

was denied horns

and was given big ears

instead of horns

**5. Wamama Wawili**

Wamama wawili wazuri

Walikwenda sokoni

Kununua tumbaku

**Two Mothers**

Two good mothers

went to the market

to buy tobacco

Na tumbaku hawakuipata, pata

but they did not get the tobacco

**6. Tea Pot**

I am a tea pot

Short and stout

This is my handle

And this is my spout

When tea time is ready

(hear me shout)x3

**7. Publican**

Publican, publican, number twenty eight

I went for a walk but now I stop and I break.

Blue band, by zero, zero point zero is a round

Round and round, I am a girl, this is a function

I must do, salute for the King, and bend for the Queen

Close your eyes and count fifteen 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15.

**8. Hapa kuna moja**

**Here there is one**

Hapa kuna moja na moja pia

Here there is one and one again

Mchezo gani huo?

What game is that?

‘Kanyama’

‘Kanyama’

Hapa kuna mbili na mbili pia

Here there is two and two again

Mchezo gani huo?

What game is that?

‘Kanyama’

Hapa kuna tatu na tatu pia

Mchezo gani huo?

‘Kanyama’

‘Kanyama’

Here there is three and three again

What game is that?

‘Kanyama’

**9. Marobo**

Marobo

Kwenda robo

Marobo

Kwenda robo

**Marobo**

Marobo

going robo

Marobo

going robo

**10. Ten Green Bottles**

Ten green bottles, standing on the wall x2

If one green bottle could accidentally fall.

There'll be nine green bottles, standing on the wall x2

If one green bottle could accidentally fall.

There'll be eight green bottles, standing on the wall x2

If one green bottle could accidentally fall.

There'll be seven green bottles, standing on the wall x2

If one green bottle could accidentally fall.

There'll be six green bottles, standing on the wall x2

If one green bottle could accidentally fall.

There'll be five green bottles, standing on the wall x2

If one green bottle could accidentally fall.

There'll be four green bottles, standing on the wall x2

If one green bottle could accidentally fall.

There'll be three green bottles, standing on the wall x2

If one green bottle could accidentally fall.

There'll be two green bottles, standing on the wall x2

If one green bottle could accidentally fall.

There'll be one green bottle, standing on the wall x2

If one green bottle could accidentally fall.

There'll be zero green bottles, standing on the wall x2

**11. Row, row, row your boat**

Row row row you boat x2

Gentle down the stream x2

Merrily, merrily, merrily merrily,

Life is but a dream x2

**12. Twinkle Twinkle Little Star**

Twinkle, twinkle little star,

How I wonder what you are x2

Up above the sky so high

Like a diamond in the sky,

Twinkle, twinkle little star,

How I wonder what you are x2

**13. Old Macdonald**

Old Macdonald had a farm,

Eeii eeii ooooooh

And on his farm there was a cow

Eeii eeii oooh

There was a moo there,

And a moo here,

Here moo, there moo every where moo, moo

Old Macdonald had a farm

Eeeii eeii oooh

Old Macdonald had a farm,

Eeii eeii ooooooh.

And on his farm there was a goat,

Eeii eeii oooh

There was a mee there,

And a mee here,

Here mee, there mee every where mee, mee

Old Macdonald had a farm

Eeeii eeii oooh

Old Macdonald had a farm,

Eeii eeii ooooooh

And on his farm there was a cock

Eeii eeii oooh

There was a cluck cluck there,

And a cluck cluck here,

Here cluck, there cluck every where cluck, cluck

Old Macdonald had a farm

Eeeii eeii oooh

#### **14. Father Abraham**

Father Abraham, had many sons,

Many sons, sons Father Abraham,

And I am one of them and so are you

So let us praise the Lord

With your right foot, left foot

Right hand, left hand

Shake your head

Turn around

Sit down

**15. If you are happy and you know**

If you are happy and you know clap your hands x2

If you are happy and you know and you know you want to show

If you are happy and you know clap your hands.

If you are happy and you know stamp your feet x2

If you are happy and you know and you know you want to show

If you are happy and you know stamp your feet.

If you are happy and you know turn around x2

If you are happy and you know and you know you want to show

If you are happy and you know turn around.

If you are happy and you know clap and say amen x2

If you are happy and you know and you know you want to show

If you are happy and you know say amen.

**16. Head, shoulder Knees and Toes**

Head, shoulder (knees and toes x3)

Head, shoulder knees and toes,

Ear, eye nose and mouth

**17. Fruits**

Avacado, Avocado

Pineapple, pineapple

Banana, Banana

Orange Oranges

Fruits are sweet

**18. Lazy Mary**

Lazy Mary will you get up?

Will you get up? Will you get up? X2

It's six o'clock in the morning

No! No mother I won't get up!

I won't get up, I won't get up!

No mother I won't get up!

At six o'clock in the morning.

**19. Three Blind Mice**

Three blind mice x2

See how they run x2

They always run after the farmer's wife,



Who cuts their tails with a carving knife!

Did you ever see such a thing in your life?

As the three blind mice!

**20. Piki Piki**

Soloist: Piki piki maua x2

All: Auua!

Soloist: Nilienda tao

All: Auua!

Soloist: Nikakuta dame

All: Auua!

Soloist: Hakukuwa dame

All: Auua!

Soloist: Alikuwa Giraffe

All: Auua!

**Motor Bike**

Motorbike, motorbike flower x2

Auua!

I went to town

Auua!

I met a lady

Auua!

She was not a lady

Auua!

She was a giraffe

Auua!

**21. Obingo obingo**

All: Obingo obingo

Soloist: Mama yangu ni Fanta

Baba yangu ni Coke

Mimi hapa ni Crest

Sisi wote ni masoda

All: Obingo obingo

**Obingo obingo**

Obingo obingo

My mother is Fanta

My Father is coke

And I am crest

All of us are Sodas

Obingo obingo

Soloist:	Mama yangu ni Orange	My mother is Orange
	Baba yangu ni Mango	My Father is Mango
	Mimi hapa ni Plums	And I am Plums
	Sisi wote ni matunda	All of us are Fruits
All:	Obingo obingo	Obi obi obingo

**22. Jingaru oya**

Jingaru Oya x2

And you (Name of a child) oya

Are you ready ?

For what?

For a jig

Jinga what?

Jingaru oya

My hands are up my feet are down

And this is the way, I Jingaru x2

**Jingaru oh Yes**

Jingaru Oh yes x4

And you (Name of a child)oh Yes

Are you ready?

For what?

For a jig?

Jinga what?

Jingaru oh yes

**23. Tembea hivi nam nam**

Soloist: Tembea hivi namnam

All: Tembea hivi namnam

Soloist: Tembea hivi namnam

All: Tembea hivi namnam

Soloist: Kama Gacucu

**Walk like this yes, yes**

Walk like this yes, yes

Walk like this yes, yes

Walk like this yes, yes

Walk like this yes, yes

Like an old woman yes yes

(Kiwete, Kaguka, Polisi) namnam (Cripple, grandfather, policeman)

Soloist: Namna hii namnam Like this yes, yes

All : Namna hii namnam Like this yes, yes

## 24. Kama wanipenda

## If you love

Soloist: Kama wanipenda If you love me

All: ii ii

Soloist: Kama wanipenda If you love me

All: ii ii

Soloist: Kama wanipenda, penda, If you love, love, love, love me  
panda, panda

All: ii ii

Soloist: Nipe hizo (viatu, Socks, skirt, kofia Give met that/those (shoes, socks,  
Skirt, ...) hat skirt...)

Respondent: Mimi sikupendi I don't love you

All: ii ii

Repondent: Mimi sikupendi, pendi, I don't love, love, love you  
pendi, pendi

All: ii ii

**25. Twasafiri Mombasa**

**We are traveling to Mombasa step by step**

**Two groups – One group asks questions and the other one answers**

Group 1 (Twasafiri Mombasa) 3x2 step by step

We are traveling to Mombasa step by step x4

Group 2 (Mwasafiri na nani) 3x2 step by step

With whom are you traveling x4

Group 1 (Amri yenu ni) 3x2 step by step

Your order is x4

Group 2 (Baba yetu mchoyo) 3x2 step by step

Our father is mean step by step x4

Group 1 (Aliwanyima nini) 3x2 step by step

What did he refuse to give you? Step by step x4

Group 2 (Alitunyima Pesa) 3x2 step by step

He refused to give us money step by step x4

Group 1 (Haya twende pamoja) 3x2 step by step

Then let us travel together step by step x4

**26. Kama Race**

**Like Race**

Soloist: Kama race, kama race

Like race, like race

All: Na Wanjiku wa siku hizi

The Wanjiku of these days

Anaringa ringa sana

is too proud

All: Anatoa race kama race

Is moving race like race

Anatoa race kama race

Anadunda – dunda dunda

Dunda dunda – dush!x2

Is moving race like race

She dances, dances, dances dances

dances dances dush!x2

**27. Chair Chair**

Chair chair, chair by chair by chair

Table, table, table by table by table

Uu nii

Sahau forget

Kidole Mr. Kambeta

Kambeta Kadush!

**Chair Chair**

Chair, chair, chair by chair by chair

Table, table, table by table by table

Who? Me?

Forget, forget

Finger Mr. Kambeta

Kambeta Kandush!

**28. Kijembe ni kikali**

Kijembe ni kikali paramparam

Kilimkata mwalimu paramparam

Mwalimu akanichapa paramaparam

Nikamwambia mama yangu paramparam

Mama yangu akaniambia paramparam

Nisicheze na masomo paramparam

Masomo ni muhimu paramaparam

Baba yangu akaniambia paramparam

Niendelea na masomo paramparam

Nikifikia university paramparam

**The razor is sharp**

The razor is sharp paramparam

It cut the teacher paramparam

The teacher beat me paramparam

I reported to my mother paramparam

My mother advised me paramparam

Not to joke around with education  
paramparam

Education is very essential paramparam

My father also advised me paramparam

I carry on with education paramparam

When I reach University paramparam

Nitacheza by short paramparam

I will play by short paramparam

**29. By Short**

By short I love you baby

The baby to the sun

The sun to the owner

The woner to the men

The ment to the bush baby

Silly one, two, three

Tata bona – Auntie see

Silly, one, two, three

Tata bona – Auntie see

Silly one, silly one by short!

**30. Boys and Girls**

**Boys and Girls**

Boys and girls

Let me tell you something about this case and about that case

Jana nilienda lamini sikumpata

Yesterday I went but I did not find her

I close my eyes

Oh figo figo

Oh figo figo

Everybody figo figo

everybody figo figo

Mzungu alisime

The white man said

Kana unawake

If you have a partner

Mshike kiunoni

Hold her at the waist

Twende chini kwa chini

Let's move together down, down x3

**31. Bones Away**

ABCD – That's the way

I like it Aha! Aha!

Bones away Aha! Aha! I like it Aha! Aha!

Dumbi Dumbi Aha! Aha!

Pressure pressure Aha! Aha!

**32. Mallow Revenger**

**Mallow Revenger**

Mallow, mallow x2 mallow revenger

Mallow, mallow x2 mallow revenger

Sing so

sing so

Sasa so Mallow

Now so Mallow

Which colour so you want?

Which colour do you want?

And Julia Kisasa

And fashionable Julia

Chubwi chubwi x2

Chubwi chubwi x2

**33. Napiga Simu**

**Am making a call**

Napiga simu

I am making a call

Hallo!

Hallo!

Huko Mombasa

To Mombasa

Naita Caroline (name of a child)

I am calling Caroline

Aje tucheze

To dance for us

Ala mpakampakacha

Alampakampakacha

Sindere Sindere x2

Sindere Sindere x2

**34. I Wrote a Letter**

I write a letter to my father

On the way I lost it,

Somebody must have pieced it up,

And put it in his pocket

It wasn't you, it wasn't you it wasn't you x2

But it was you!

**35. Mama Milka**

Mama Milka, Milka

Milka Milka bonye

Bonye bonye waru

Waru waru chips

Sisi nani, nani

Sisi skao, skao

Wale nani, nani

Wale choko, choko

Chenja 1,2, x2

Three chenja step 1, 2, 3,

**Milka's Mother**

Mother of Milka, Milka

Milka, Milka bonye

Bonye bonye potatoes

Potatoes potatoes chips

Who are we, we?

We are skao, skao

Who are those, those?

Those are troublesome

Change 1, 2, x2

Three change the step 1, 2, 3.



**36. Sabina Sabina**

Sabina, Sabina

Nampenda Sabina

Na mototo analia ing'ee, ing'ee

Kadenge na mpira

Sili goo

Ae Mama

Sili bigijii

Nataka mbolgam

Kibiriti uncle, uncle

When I go to Nairobi

Other day cati, cati, kibiriti

Mzee kipara tumpeleke nyumbani

Akicheza tumchape matako

**Sabina Sabina**

Sabina Sabina

I love Sabina

And the baby is crying ing'ee, ing'ee

Kadenge with a ball

Sili goo

Oh Mum

I don't eat Big G

I want ball gum

Match box uncle, uncle

When I go to Nairobi

other day shirt shirt match box

We take the old man home

If he brings trouble we beat him at  
the buttocks

**37. Mama Njeri**

Mama Njeri Yoo!

Waenda wapi?

Sokoni

Kununua nini?

Samaki

Samaki gain?

**Njeri's Mother**

Mother of Njeri Yes!

Where are you going?

To the market

To buy what?

Some Fish

What type of Fish?

Omena	Dagger (the small fish)
Haya kwaheri	Okay bye
Salimia watoto	Greet your children
Nasikia Bwana yako aliumwa na nyoka	I heard that your husband was bitten by a snake
Auuii!	Auuii!
Nifanye nini na sina mwingine	What shall I do yet I don't have another one
Wakunisaidia	To help me?
Sijampata kuku sijampata	I did not get the chicken, I did not.
One, two, three ... ten.	One, two, three...ten.